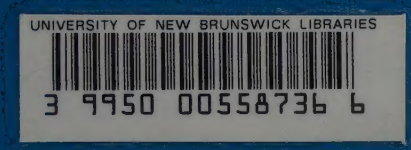
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THE TEXT OF SHAKESPEARE

Shakespearean Wars

I

SHAKESPEARE AS A DRAMATIC ARTIST

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II

SHAKESPEARE AND VOLTAIRE

Already Published

III

THE TEXT OF SHAKESPEARE

THE TEXT
OF
SHAKESPEARE

ITS HISTORY FROM THE PUBLICATION OF THE QUARTOS AND FOLIOS DOWN TO AND INCLUDING THE PUBLICATION OF THE EDITIONS OF POPE AND THEOBALD

BY

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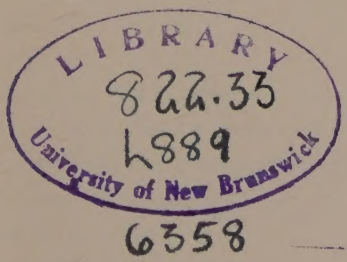

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1906

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Published September, 1906

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

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PREFACE

The two previous volumes of this series have been given up to the consideration of the controversies which deal with Shakespeare as a dramatic artist. The ground covered had, to some extent at least, been already gone over by several. It is a theme indeed upon which many profess to have what they are pleased to call a general knowledge. But both experience and observation show that the profession of general knowledge is usually coincident with the possession of specific ignorance; and there may be occasion later to exemplify the confusion which is sure to arise when limited information on this subject unites with unlimited assumption to draw inferences and deduce conclusions. But whatever may be true of the controversy in regard to Shakespeare as a dramatic artist, about most of the matter contained in the present volume there is no general knowledge; at least what there is going under that name is usually based upon misapprehension where it is not itself positively erroneous.

The settlement of the text of Shakespeare, so far as it can be called settled, has been the work of successive generations of scholars. It was transmitted to later times in a state more or less imperfect. To restore it

to its presumed primitive integrity engaged from an early period the attention of a constantly increasing number of men interested in the writings of the great dramatist. The result of their labors, as we find it to-day, has been reached gradually. The establishment of the right reading was at the outset attended in numerous instances with difficulties of which we at the present time hardly dream. It was not merely that the knowledge of words, or of meanings once belonging to words, had been lost. It was not merely that much of the grammar of the Elizabethan period was no longer understood. There was almost complete ignorance of the methods which needed to be employed to rescue the text from the corruption into which it had been plunged by the ignorance of type-setters, the indifference of proof-readers, and the incompetence of editors.

By the dawn of the nineteenth century the authoritative consideration of the text of Shakespeare and of the proper manner of treating it had passed into the hands of specialists. There it has since remained. But this was not so in the beginning. Nothing is more noticeable in the history of the original efforts directed towards the rectification of the readings than the extent to which the task was undertaken by men of letters as distinguished from scholars. Especially was this true of a good part of the eighteenth century. There was then a disposition to look upon the position of the specialist as ridiculous and his action as an impertinence. It is the participation in the work of revision of authors of all grades of eminence that gives a peculiar character

to the earlier controversies which sprang up. It makes the discussion of the text of Shakespeare to some extent a part of the literary history of the eighteenth century, as it has never been that of any period since.

No one needs to be told that the establishment of the text has been attended throughout with controversies. These have occasionally been long and have often been bitter. Deplorable as has been the ill-feeling sometimes engendered, great as has been the injustice sometimes wrought, none the less is it true that through the agency of these wordy wars the knowledge of the whole subject has been perceptibly advanced. Never has this observation been more true than of the first, the most protracted and the most important of them all. This is the altercation that went on between Pope and Theobald. It was the differences between these rival editors that opened the era of controversy which has continued with little cessation to our own day.

Accordingly the subject of the present volume, taken up as it is with the history of this controversy, begins, strictly speaking, with the fifth chapter. Whatever value the work possesses must be determined by that which follows after. What appears previously is designed to set forth the causes existing in the dramatic situation of the Elizabethan age which rendered controversy about the text of Shakespeare not merely possible but practically inevitable. These introductory chapters have in consequence been made as brief as could be done, consistently with giving the reader any proper comprehension of the matters upon which they

touch; for while the facts contained in them are of first importance in serving to explain why it was that the plays of Shakespeare came down in the corrupt condition they did, they are of subsidiary importance in the discussion of that which constitutes the main subject of the present treatise.

In setting out to give an account of this controversy a problem of peculiar difficulty presented itself. How happened it that the one man whose extensive learning and exceptional acumen have done more — if the circumstances are taken into consideration — towards rectifying the text of Shakespeare than has been effected by any single editor since, should nevertheless have gained the reputation of being extraordinarily dull? The superiority of the work Theobald accomplished was acknowledged willingly or grudgingly — in general grudgingly — by his contemporaries and immediate successors. He set forth both by example and precept the proper methods by which the original could be restored. He brought clearness to places to all appearances hopelessly obscure. He made emendations to the text which became at once so integral a part of it that none but special students are now aware that the reading universally found is not the reading which the earliest authorities contain. All later editors have profited by the results of his labor and abilities, none more so than the men who have been conspicuous in maligning him. Yet his name speedily became and long remained a synonym for a dunce. Such indeed it still continues to be with that part of the educated public who are not

sufficiently educated in this matter to know the falseness of the beliefs they have inherited from the past.

To make clear how this condition of things was brought about requires the consideration of numerous details in the literary history of the eighteenth century which seem far removed from any questions connected with the text of Shakespeare. It requires in particular a full discussion of several productions which exerted marked influence in causing the estimate to be taken of Theobald that came to prevail. Of these the first and far the most effective was 'The Dunciad.' This satire was a Shakespearean document pure and simple. Furthermore, it is the greatest work in English literature to which Shakespearean controversy has given birth. But it is not of that form of it which we find printed to-day, it is not of that form of it with which we are all now familiar, that this assertion holds good. 'The Dunciad' which played so important a part in Shakespearean controversy has practically passed away both from the memory and the sight of men. There are modern editions of Pope's works which reprint it as it appeared in 1728, as a sort of appendix to its present form. But the enlarged and complete form which it assumed in 1729 and held for the fourteen years following, with the elaborate textual apparatus accompanying it, has never been reproduced in anything like its entirety. The recast of 1743 not merely changed its character, it removed almost entirely its significance as a factor in Shakespearean controversy. The substitution of a new hero rendered necessary the

omission or alteration of lines referring to the original hero, or their application to some one else. More than that, it swept out of existence all the notes bearing directly or remotely upon the proper method of editing the text of Shakespeare.

The result is that men have come to forget that 'The Dunciad' had its life breathed into it by the inspiration of Shakespearean controversy. From it, as it now appears, it would be impossible to get any real conception of the agencies which called it into being. In particular, the relation which it bore to Theobald and his criticism of Pope's edition of Shakespeare never receives from those discussing the satire its due emphasis, and sometimes not even so much as an allusion. Furthermore, the truth of the statements about him contained in its notes has never been made the subject of investigation. The very notes about him and his work have themselves nearly all disappeared; but the falsehoods found in them which Pope set in circulation have never ceased to be repeated, and may be said to flourish still in their original vitality.

Many of these misrepresentations of the original hero have now become so hoary with age that though far from venerable they are treated with veneration. They have been accepted as true not only by his enemies but by his friends. One example must suffice; but it is a significant one. None have been more cordial in recognizing the service rendered by Theobald to the text of the dramatist than the editors of the invaluable edition which goes under the name of the Cambridge Shake-

speare. Yet we find in the preface to that work a statement about him to the effect that he was "in the habit of communicating notes on passages of Shakespeare to 'Mist's Journal,' a weekly Tory organ." This assertion was one of the growths of that fertile breeding-ground of baseless insinuation and deliberate misstatement, the prose commentary to 'The Dunciad' of 1729 and its immediate successors. It has been repeated constantly. How little there is of truth in it, or rather how much there is of falsehood, any one will discover to his fullest satisfaction who takes the trouble to read the sixteenth chapter of the present volume. Even the mere list of Theobald's letters contained in the index under his name will furnish an ample corrective.

The difficulty, therefore, with the modern accounts of 'The Dunciad' is that they are based essentially upon the final form which it came to assume. It has not been approached from the Shakespearean side, the only side from which it could be properly understood. Accordingly the circumstances which occasioned its creation have either been disregarded entirely or have met with that slight perfunctory mention which hides instead of revealing their significance. I think I may venture to say, without making an undue claim for myself or intending any disparagement of the work accomplished by others, that in this volume the story of the original 'Dunciad' has been told for the first time in its entirety; the motives set forth which led to its production; the steps which marked its inception and progress; the immediate as well as remote effects wrought by it. In

addition the erroneous statements are exposed which are still repeated and credited as to the havoc it wrought.

In making this assertion I am fully aware of the great labor which has already been spent upon the elucidation of the problems connected with the production of the satire. So far indeed am I from underrating the value of the results reached by the exertions of others that it seems hardly necessary to say that had not they done what they did, it would have been impossible to carry forward to any successful completion the work for which they paved the way. He indeed who devotes himself to the study of any special literary or historical subject soon comes to recognize that he must build upon the foundations laid by his predecessors. Even the errors into which they have been betrayed cannot be corrected without the aid of the materials which they have supplied; and it would be an ungrateful as well as an ungracious task not to acknowledge the obligation he is under to the very men whose assertions he denies and whose conclusions he controverts. I speak this in particular with reference to the edition of Pope by Elwin and Courthope, the one to which references are regularly made in the notes. I have had occasion to point out a few errors in this work and could have pointed out some others. Yet without the help furnished by it, not only would my own labors have been vastly increased, but I should have been left in many cases in doubt where it is now possible to feel that certainty has been reached.

But a still further difficulty early presented itself. The original 'Dunciad' was primarily designed to

attack the critic of Pope's edition of Shakespeare and to turn into ridicule the methods he had put forth to restore the text of the plays. But while that was the main object, it was not the only object. Pope made use of the work to assail all his enemies or supposed enemies. In the case of some of these the feeling displayed surpassed in virulence and intensity that manifested towards the man who occasioned the satire itself and had been chosen its hero. In consequence the Shakespearean quarrel became involved with and to no small extent merged in numerous other quarrels in which the poet was concerned. One great object originally held in view in the preparation of this volume was to disengage it from these with which it had become associated and intermixed. But it became at last evident that it was not possible — at least it was not within the possibility of any powers of mine — to disentangle it from the many with which it had become interwoven, and at the same time give any proper conception of the attitude and acts of the protagonists in the Shakespearean controversy. Were it detached entirely from the rest, the devices to which Pope resorted to discredit his rival editor would be at best but imperfectly apprehended, certainly not fully comprehended. No other course seemed to lie open than to give a fairly complete account of the various agencies which Pope made use of in the numerous controversies in which he was a participant, so far as the Shakespearean quarrel had any connection with them at all. The enforced change of plan has not merely delayed the publication of the present volume,

but has rendered it necessary to defer to a future one an account of the later controversies about the text which went on during the eighteenth century.

Hence this work, instead of being devoted exclusively to its professed subject, is largely taken up with matters in which that is concerned but indirectly. Though never lost sight of, it cannot be denied that it plays a very insignificant part in some of the chapters. In truth the present volume deals almost as much with Pope as it does with Shakespeare; as much with certain phases of the literary history of the eighteenth century as it does with any discussion of the changes which have been made in the text of the plays. Nearly all the authors of the period, whether eminent or obscure, appear in its pages. The method of proceeding adopted required the perusal of the writings of the now little known men whom Pope assailed, and of the equally little known men whom he praised. It further imposed the necessity of going carefully through the ephemeral literature of the period — much of it not easily accessible — the essays, the pamphlets, the miscellanies, the magazines, the daily and weekly journals. The reading of numerous forgotten books, the examination year by year of numerous forgotten newspapers, is hardly so much a course of penitential as it is of penitentiary reading. Yet this study of the dusty records of a neglected past, however toilsome and tedious, has had its compensations. It has cast an entirely new light upon several transactions. It has revealed the baselessness of a number of beliefs which have been accepted as true in literary

history. It has furnished the means of securing the precise form of the sentences which Pope misquoted or garbled to serve his own ends, of exposing the ingenuity of his disingenuousness, and of bringing out clearly the vague and shadowy nature of the relation existing between any given fact and his account of it.

There were certain other matters which needed explication before the merits of the controversy could be understood. It has been found incumbent to give an account of several of the minor pieces which came out during the period under survey. Nor could some of the newspaper organs, in which discussion was carried on, be overlooked. In particular I have devoted a whole chapter to the history of Pope's personal organ, the 'Grub-street Journal.' This publication has never received the attention it deserves in any study of the numerous quarrels in which the poet took part. Its actual editorship, I feel confident, has been established in these pages. The assignment to this post of Dr. Richard Russell, given in all recent biographies of Pope and in all books of reference, can hardly be anything but an error. I may add further, that the confusion existing in these works between two physicians with this same name has been dissipated by the research of Miss E. J. Hastings of London, who has kindly communicated to me the results of her investigations.

To the settlement of the vexed questions connected with the bibliography of 'The Dunciad' the examination of the periodical literature of the period has contributed some further aid. The new facts adduced

seem to me to justify all the inferences which are drawn as to the reasons which led to the adoption of the mysterious operations connected with the publication of 'The Dunciad' of 1728 and of 1729, as well as turning into certainties the beliefs commonly held as to the time and order of the appearance of the several editions belonging to the latter year. Certain details here given would indeed be subject to modification, if any publisher or even bookseller named Dod or Dob could be shown to have been in existence. Such a fact would prove that they were real beings, and not, as is here assumed, mere dummies created by Pope for his own purposes. But the main contention would not be affected, even were it discovered that such men actually had a being. All that needs to be said here is that before venturing to express an opinion on this point I examined scores and scores of title-pages and scores and scores of book advertisements and never once met with either of these names save as publishers of 'Dunciad' editions of 1729. On the other hand, A. Dodd, whose existence has been denied, was a very real person. The name is found then and subsequently on the title-pages of a number of books. Whether it denotes a man or a woman is not so easy to ascertain; for in some of the newspapers of the time a Mrs. Dodd appears as a bookseller with a shop in the neighborhood of Temple Bar.

Of some interest, if not of importance in Shakespearean controversy, was one discovery which, though much longed for, came to me, after all, unexpectedly, while wading through this apparently interminable bog of

periodical literature. A chance allusion in the correspondence of Theobald and Warburton, contained in Nichols's 'Illustration of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century' — cited in the notes simply as Nichols — had long led me to feel confident that Warburton at this early period had published three anonymous articles attacking Pope. But all memory of them had vanished utterly. Not so much as an allusion to them has ever been made either by his friends or enemies. In fact it is apparent that hardly any one during his lifetime and no one after his death had even suspected the existence of such pieces, far less known of them. There was consequently no hint to be found in any quarter as to the place where, and scarcely any as to the time when these articles had made their appearance. To search for them seemed therefore very much like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. It was my good fortune, however, to light upon them in a London daily paper of 1729. A summary of their contents will be found in the seventeenth chapter. They furnish proof which cannot be gainsaid, of the virulently hostile attitude, previously suspected, which Warburton at that time held towards the man whose champion and beneficiary he was later to become. They have furthermore a certain interest as containing the first of any emendations of his which appeared in print. These are not many and their value does not make up for their rarity. A few of them have never found record in any variorum edition. It is for their curiosity rather than for their importance that they have here been exhumed from

the newspaper grave in which they have lain buried for a period approaching two centuries.

The results here presented of the study made both of the subject and of the literary history of the period under consideration undoubtedly tend to impart a higher estimate of Theobald's ability and achievement than has been entertained even by those who have shown themselves most favorable in their judgment. In this respect they are in full accord with the general trend of later Shakespearean investigation. The number of examples given of emendations he made have been cited, however, for something else than to establish beyond question the existence of the learning and the acumen which he brought to bear upon the revision of Shakespeare's dramatic works. They have been largely introduced to show to the reader who has paid no special attention to the subject the status of the original text and the methods which have been followed to bring it into its present condition of comparative perfection. A few illustrations of the alterations he made will convey a clearer comprehension of the difficulties that had to be met and overcome than would pages of general observation.

But though the facts revealed in these investigations turn out distinctly favorable to Theobald, they have in no case been manipulated in order to produce whatever impression they convey. So far as one can be permitted to trust his own motives, I have not been conscious of the least inclination to give an account of any circumstances which is not in accordance with the precise truth;

or to draw any inferences or to make any assertions which were not supported by reasonable and even convincing proofs. This has been particularly my aim in the case of those statements which conflict with views generally held or beliefs assumed as established in current literary history. I hold no brief for Theobald. I have not neglected to point out places where his statements were wrong and his conclusions mistaken, or where his conduct was censurable. There is no reason for according him qualities and qualifications to which he is not entitled because he has been misrepresented and maligned for centuries, and has been called dull by men who were themselves duller than he could ever have thought of being.

Finally, let it not be fancied that I delude myself with the belief that the facts here presented, incontrovertible as they are, will reverse the verdict passed upon the man by ages too prejudiced to consider fairly, too indifferent to feel concern, too indolent to investigate. The world cares very little for justice. It is not indeed solicitous about it in the case of its greatest names, if the trouble of ascertaining truth overbalances to any extent the comfort which attends the acceptance of easy falsehood. Immeasurably more will this disinclination exist in the case of an obscure scholar of whom few know and about whom fewer care. To some the subject itself will be a weariness, to most a matter of absolute indifference. It is for that comparatively small class who are interested in the history of the text of Shakespeare; of that other small class who are interested in the literary

history of the eighteenth century and of the character and acts of its foremost poet; and of that smallest of all classes, made up of those who are anxious that justice should be rendered to a humble but much maligned scholar to whom all readers of the greatest of dramatists are profoundly indebted — it is mainly for the men of these classes that this volume has been prepared.

THE TEXT OF SHAKESPEARE

CHAPTER I

THE DRAMATIC SITUATION IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

WHERE is to be found the best text of Shakespeare's works? Of the many editions before the public, which is the one to be preferred? These are questions which are pretty certain to be asked by him who is about to take up for the first time the study of that author's dramatic productions. It may and it sometimes does cause a feeling of disappointment when the answer is made — as no other answer can fairly be made — that not only is there no best edition of Shakespeare's works, but there never can be and never will be one. By this best edition is meant of course that which is so reckoned by the concurrent and concurring voices of all entitled to speak with authority. Doubtless there may be one which will receive the large majority of the suffrages of a particular period. But the only man who could have compelled the assent of every one to the readings he chose was Shakespeare himself. Inasmuch as he failed to establish definitively the text, we can continue confident that so long as the knowledge and taste and judgment of men vary, no edition will ever attain to that authoritative position in which it is received as the standard one for all time.

If the plays of Shakespeare, like his two principal poems, had been brought out under his own supervision, the text would for all practical purposes have been settled for us finally. We might find fault with it; we might suggest improvements in it; we might profess our inability to understand it; we might object to particular words and phrases found in it; we might charge the poet with being unidiomatic and ungrammatical, careless in his construction, confused in his expression, with every defect, in fine, which is apt to be discovered in the great masters of our literature by those who exhibit that enthusiasm about, or possess that confidence in, verbal criticism which results from a late study of good usage or a limited acquaintance with it. But the very worst of these critics would respect the integrity of the readings transmitted to us. Even he who possessed the necessary imbecility to condemn would lack the necessary impudence to alter. Shakespeare would accordingly stand or fall in our estimation by our estimation of what was handed down, undeterred by the possibility that his words had been changed or perverted by the carelessness or contrivance of the men who were to speak them, or had been corrupted by the blunders of those who printed them.

But, so far from having any assurance to this effect, we can be reasonably certain that to a greater or less extent his writings have suffered from both these calamities. Shakespeare has a peculiar distinction among English authors of the very first rank who have appeared since the invention of printing. He is the only one of that class who stands to us in the same

position as do the authors who flourished in the age of manuscript. There is the same uncertainty as to his text which exists in regard to theirs. In his case as in theirs the same necessity is found for emendation and revision. In him as in them occur corrupt passages in which the hard task is laid upon human ingenuity, not to extract a meaning from them, but to put a meaning into them. Hence the subject of the text of Shakespeare, while strictly not exciting in itself, has become the subject of excited controversy. For this fact there is the justification that the correctness of the readings employed is something more than a matter of importance to the special student of language. It is of even higher interest to every one who looks at the works of the poet from the side of literature pure and simple.

It is accordingly natural to ask for the cause or causes which brought about this condition of things. How happened it that the works of the greatest dramatist in our literature should seemingly have attracted so little his attention and regard that a complete collection of them never appeared during his lifetime? He was particular in setting forth accurately his two principal poems. Why did he fail so to show the same interest in the far superior pieces written for the stage? In the publication of several of the single plays which came out while he was living in London it is impossible to believe that he had the slightest concern. Even of the very best and most correctly printed of these, few would be found to maintain as indisputable that they had ever been subjected to his supervision. Not one of them but

contains perplexing or inexplicable words or passages which could hardly have passed unchallenged had the author himself seen his work through the press.

The inquiry is therefore inevitable, How came these things to be so? What caused the text of Shakespeare to fall into the corrupt condition in which it has come down to us? Before such questions can be answered, we must understand the relations in which the dramatic literature of the Elizabethan age stood to the life of the times. We must further understand the sentiments which the playwrights of that day entertained about their own productions. Then only can we comprehend the nature of the feelings which were affecting them all. Then it will be seen that much which the superficial view is disposed to regard as peculiar to Shakespeare was in reality common; much that seems strange in his attitude towards his own dramatic works will be found to be the attitude of nearly every one of his contemporaries.

There is first the general view of the situation which has to be taken into consideration. Nothing is more noticeable in every literary epoch, especially in every great creative epoch, than the fact that one kind of production takes precedence of all in general interest. It is not that this is the exclusive way in which intellectual activity manifests itself; it is simply the preferred way. Nor is it that this kind is necessarily regarded as the highest in character. It is merely the one which for the mass of men possesses the greatest attraction. To it, therefore, and to its cultivation the minds of those who are anxious for purely literary distinction are almost

certain to be directed. An illustration or two taken from our own literature will make this point perfectly clear.

In the reign of Queen Anne and the first Georges every one wrote short essays, which came out regularly under some particular title, either independently, or as contributions to the columns of established newspapers. All of us are familiar — at least in theory — with the writings in this form of Steele, Addison, Swift, Dr. Johnson, and in fact with the somewhat depressing collection of fifty volumes, more or less, which go under the general name of the British Essayists. Still, very few have any conception of the immense amount of literature of this sort, often famous, or at least notorious, in its day, which has practically passed away from the memory of all men and from the sight of most. There are thousands of these essays preserved in scores of volumes which, if to be seen at all, are met with only on the shelves of great libraries. Many of them have never been reprinted from the columns of the daily or weekly journals in which they made their appearance.

Nor is the fate which has overtaken these writings altogether due to the fact that they were inferior productions or the productions of inferior men. On the contrary, the authors of these forgotten pieces have in some instances occupied a high position. One example will suffice. How many students even of eighteenth-century literature are familiar with the essays of Fielding which appeared in 'The Champion,' in 'The True Patriot,' in 'The Jacobite Journal,' and in 'The Covent Garden Journal'? Many of them abounded in the

keenest wit and satire. Yet few even of the highly educated know anything about them. To most men they are something more than unheard of, — they are inaccessible if heard of. The very fullest editions of Fielding's works contain but a selection of them, — a selection, too, not always made with the best of judgment.

It is needless, however, to go so far back as the eighteenth century to find a striking proof of the truth of the general assertion. In our own time there are two ways in which literary activity is inclined to manifest itself. These are the novel and the newspaper. There is hardly a young person, in whom the passion for purely literary distinction exists, who does not at the present time either write or contemplate writing a novel. The tendency is so strong that men entirely unfitted for it, or who have achieved reputation in other fields of labor, are drawn into it almost involuntarily. In fact the novel has been largely converted, or some would choose to say perverted, from its original intent. If in our time one wishes to propagate new views in politics or religion, to attack existing abuses, to advance fresh theories upon any subject, a natural or at least a most effective method of giving currency to his opinions is through the medium of fictitious narrative. The newspaper is with us even a more universal attraction, if not so potent in individual cases. Every one writes to some extent for it, though every one's writings do not always appear. Still the immense influence wielded by the periodical press makes the profession, in spite of the hard work and wretched pay which often attend it, more an object

of attraction to young men and to men who are anxious to impress their opinions upon the minds of their contemporaries.

What the essay was to the men of the eighteenth century, what the novel and the newspaper are to the men of our day, the drama was to the age of Elizabeth and James. It was the readiest way to achieve literary popularity. It was the most effective engine for influencing the community in days when none of the modern agencies for this purpose existed. It was all the more effective because, like the modern novel, its professed aim was not to instruct, but to delight. As a natural consequence the profession of playwright, though by no means highest in public estimation, was nevertheless the one which appealed most powerfully to all aspirants for intellectual distinction. Everybody wrote, or tried to write, for the stage. It made no difference whether men were educated for law or for divinity or for medicine; provided they had an ambition to achieve for themselves a name in contemporary literature, their exertions in two cases out of three were sure to be turned towards that one form of literary activity which conferred in the same breath popularity and power. So wide-embracing and far-reaching was the sweep of the dramatic maelstrom that it drew into its vortex future occupants of pulpits who were sometimes later to preach against the very profession they had practised. It attracted members of the nobility who ran counter to the sentiment prevailing in the class to which they belonged, that writing for the stage was something not consonant with the dignity of their order. "The Earl of Derby," said,

as if slightingly, a letter-writer in 1598, "is busy penning comedies for the common players." [1]

In consequence of this wide-spread interest the production of plays was enormous. But no enormous number has been preserved. The plays now extant, excluding masques and pageants, are well under seven hundred. Until of late it has been the universally accepted doctrine that the immense majority of the pieces then brought out have perished. In the general denial which has gone on during the last half-century of everything which previously no one presumed even to doubt, it would have been strange if this particular belief had not also been made the subject of attack. We have accordingly been told that nearly everything of a dramatic character which the past produced has been transmitted to the present. If it has not come down under its own name, it exists disguised under some other. This would be a most cheering view to take, could the facts be made to accommodate themselves to it. The difficulties in the way, the recital of a few instances out of many will serve to indicate.

Thomas Heywood, in the address to the reader prefixed to his play of 'The English Traveller,' published in 1633, speaks of that tragi-comedy as one "reserved amongst two hundred and twenty," in which he had had "the entire hand or at least a main finger." He was at that time in the full vigor of his powers. As the date given is nine years before the closing of the theaters, there is little doubt that this number would be swelled

[1] State Papers, Domestic Series, 1598–1601, p. 227. Letter of George Fenner to Humphrey Galdelli.

considerably if we could add to it the dramatic pieces which he produced during the intervening period. But whatever was the exact amount of his enormous production, all of it which has survived the wreck which has overtaken the literature of the stage are just twenty-four plays. The accounts contained in the so-called 'Diary' of the stage-manager, Philip Henslowe, lead to the same conclusion. Take the case of Dekker. From this work we know that from the beginning of 1598 to the end of 1602, that dramatist produced ten entire plays of his own, and in conjunction with others wrote at least thirty, besides making additions to and alterations in nearly a half-dozen more. Thus during the space of somewhat less than four years he was concerned to a greater or less extent in the production of full forty plays.

In truth all the evidence which has come down leads directly to the conclusion that the vast majority of the plays produced during the Elizabethan period have perished. In 1598 Francis Meres, in his literary drag-net called *Palladis Tamia*, tells us that both Henry Chettle and Richard Hathway were then reckoned as among the best writers for comedy, and Ben Jonson one of the best for tragedy. The prevalence of such a view implies that there had been by that time a respectable body of production by the three men in these two departments of the drama. Yet not a single comedy of either Chettle or Hathway, written before 1598, is certainly extant, nor a single tragedy of Ben Jonson. Between February 15, 1592, and October 5, 1597, Henslowe records the performance of about one hundred and twenty new pieces. It is an understatement to say that above two-

thirds of these have disappeared. When we come to individual writers the facts are even more impressive. Between the latter part of 1597 and the middle of March, 1603, Henslowe gives the title of thirteen plays which Chettle wrote wholly, and of thirty-six in whose composition or revision he had a part. Of the thirteen, only a corrupt copy of one has been preserved, or at least has been printed. Of the thirty-six, but four have survived. Hathway's case is even worse. Sixteen plays in which he had a hand are mentioned. Not a single one is extant. Many similar illustrations from various quarters could be furnished. An altogether wrong estimate of the aggregate would indeed be got by adding together the works of different writers: for in that case the same piece might be reckoned several times. But even with this modification the facts suffice to establish the truth of the common belief.

There has already been occasion to refer to the work which goes under the name of 'Henslowe's Diary.' Well known as it is to all students of the Elizabethan drama, it is so little known to the rest of the world that there is ample reason for a particular description of it here. This is all the more desirable because its contents supply, to him who has eyes to see, a vivid picture of the dramatic situation as it is found in the closing years of the reign of Elizabeth. For the information it furnishes of the practices then prevalent and of the sentiments then prevailing, it has no rival in records of any sort which have come down from that period. Of Henslowe himself it is sufficient to say that he was a man engaged in various occupations who became largely interested in

the management and construction of theaters. He was doubtless led to take an increasing share in these enterprises by the connection formed with his family by the celebrated actor Edward Alleyn, the founder of Dulwich College.

The name of Diary applied to the work is a misleading one. It is really little else than a depository of memoranda of payments to and transactions with dramatic writers; of receipts from performances on each night, with the name of the play; and further of the expenditure made for stage equipments of various kinds. The continuous reading of an account-book does not contribute to hilarity, and this particular one combines difficulty of decipherment with dryness of detail. Henslowe, while clearly a clever business man, was an illiterate one even for his own time. Among other things he held peculiar views as to English orthography, which is peculiar enough of itself without receiving contributions from outside sources. Occasionally the names he gives to plays — such, for illustration, as "too harpes" and "the forteion tenes," — defy all attempts at the unravelment of their mystery. The Diary too has suffered from the injurious agencies that are always threatening works left in manuscript. Portions of it had disappeared when it was first published in full in 1845. The loss of such was made up to some extent by the interpolation of forgeries. These, until exposed, contributed to render untrustworthy what had been originally defective. Yet imperfect as is the form in which the work was originally written, and more imperfect as it is in the form in which it now exists, its apparently dreary collection of names

and dates enables us to make more definite statements in regard to the Elizabethan stage than any other source now known.

Of late years, indeed, it has been quite the fashion to find fault with Henslowe's character and conduct, and as a consequence to discredit the value of the inferences which can be drawn from the testimony he furnishes. Every scrap of evidence to his disadvantage — from the nature of the case entirely one-sided — has been carefully sifted out and set forth conspicuously. He has been described as a particularly disreputable specimen of a particularly disreputable class. According to this portrayal he was hard, grasping, and penurious. The men who wrote for him were in a condition little above that of servitude. He took advantage of their necessities; he forced them to do for him as much as possible for as little remuneration as possible. We are fairly compelled to believe, from the contrast regularly drawn between him and the occupants of a position similar to his own, that the managers of other companies — certainly of the one to which Shakespeare belonged — went into the business from motives so generous and noble as strictly to deserve the name of philanthropic. No mere love of lucre stirred their hearts, no sordid desire of making money influenced their actions. They had but few authors in their employ. These they paid with liberality, these they treated in all ways generously. They were solicitous to get from them their very best work. Consequently they brought out comparatively few pieces. So long as we know nothing, we are at liberty to conjecture everything; and it is upon lack of evidence of any

sort that theories of this particular sort are built up. Their chief value is the contribution they make to our knowledge of the innocence as well as the virtue of their originators. They are based upon so lofty a conception of the nature of men in general, and of stage-managers in particular, that a certain regret must always be felt that belief in them must rest entirely upon faith, and not at all upon sight. Accordingly they may be dismissed with a confidence equal to the confidence with which they are proposed.

Henslowe, it must be confessed, was not a character to which the slightest romantic interest attaches itself. To be engaged at various times in the various occupations of dyer, pawn-broker, starch-manufacturer, dealer in real estate, stage-manager, and in all these to keep an eye fixed upon the main chance, argues a certain business versatility; but it does not invest the man with personal attraction. Yet it is much more than doubtful if there be the least justification for the opprobrious terms which of late have been employed in speaking of him. There is no reason to believe that his treatment of authors was exceptional. There is no ground for asserting that the prices he paid them were lower than those paid elsewhere. He doubtless got his plays as cheaply as he could. This is a course of conduct not peculiar to the man or his time. Some of his payments were made at the instance of the actors themselves. There is accordingly every reason to believe that the bargain had been effected by them originally; that it was they who had agreed with the author upon the price, and that it was through them the money was transmitted. If the

account-books of other companies had been preserved, it is tolerably certain that a condition of things not essentially dissimilar would be exhibited. It is hardly fair to single Henslowe out for reprobation because we happen to know what he did, and are utterly ignorant of what others did. We are therefore fully justified in accepting the conclusions which can be drawn from an analysis of the information which his work supplies.

Such an analysis discloses several facts of importance bearing directly upon the dramatic situation of the time. The first is that at that period plays had no run, in the modern sense of the word. This involves a good deal more than might be supposed at the first glance. The examination of Henslowe's 'Diary' shows that there are but two instances where the same play was acted on two successive days. Furthermore, the same play was never acted with great frequency. An interval of several days generally took place between the performances of the most popular. When a new dramatic piece was brought out, it was in most cases not repeated for at least a week afterward. In fact, two weeks or more often elapsed between the first two times of representation, and occasionally, even a month. In nearly a fourth of the plays recorded by Henslowe, the interval was shorter, not extending beyond three or four days; and one of them, styled 'Valteger,' produced December 4, 1596, achieved the distinction of being performed the day following. Whatever was the reason for this unusual proceeding, the receipts show that it was not due to any excessive popularity of the piece. The only other instance of the same play being performed on successive days is that of

one entitled 'Alexander and Lodowick,' which was acted on the 11th and 12th of February, 1597. These were its second and third representations, it having been first brought out the fourteenth day of the preceding January.

A fairly correct estimate of the general situation at that time may be gained, by bringing into one view the facts furnished by Henslowe's Diary in regard to the representation of three of Marlowe's plays during the years 1594, 1595, and 1596. These are: 'The Jew of Malta,' 'Doctor Faustus,' and 'Tamburlaine.' All of them had been produced some time before. But though their novelty was gone, they continued to retain their hold upon the theater-going public. Accordingly, the frequency of their performance each year may be taken as giving, on the whole, the average number of representations likely then to be reached by a popular play. Henslowe's account extends over about nine and a half months of 1594; a little less than nine months of 1595; and a little less than seven months of 1596. Presumably, the theater or theaters in which he was interested were closed during the periods of which nothing is reported. His record shows that in 1594, 'The Jew of Malta' was acted fifteen times; in 1595 not once, and in 1596 eight times. 'Doctor Faustus' is mentioned as first performed during this period in 1594, on the 30th of September; but before the end of the year it had been acted eight times. In 1595 there were seven representations of it, and in 1596, eight. 'Tamburlaine,' a play then at least seven years old, was brought out again in 1594, on the 28th of August.

Before the year closed, there had been eight performances in all. In 1595, there were six representations of this piece; though the number would have to be doubled, were we to add to it the representations of its second part, which usually took place the day following that of the first. In 1596, it was acted seven times.

The varying numbers here given pretty fairly represent the varying success of the new plays produced at this period. Unfortunately, Henslowe's record of the pieces and the dates of their performance ceases on the fifth of November, 1597. It is therefore possible that the statements made about the frequency of repetition may not continue true as time went on. It would, in all probability, tend to become less true as we get further into the seventeenth century. Data for making any positive assertions on this point are, however, exceedingly scanty. Still, it is certain that later, under exceptional circumstances, pieces had now and then what might justly be termed a run. The title-page of a comedy of Middleton's, called 'The Game at Chess,' which was first produced in 1624, represents the play as having been acted nine days together at the Globe. Even then its performance was stopped by royal order. But the favor it met was due to other causes than its excellence as a work of art. It really owed its success to its political character. Both the English and Spanish courts were brought upon the stage. The Spanish ambassador was unmercifully attacked both on the score of his political intrigues, and of his personal deformities. But the very fact that it

had been acted for nine successive days was at that time the very strongest sort of evidence to the reader that it had been extraordinarily successful; while the calling attention to what would now seem so small a number of performances as a proof of its success, marks very clearly the great difference in this respect between the two ages in which there has existed no restriction upon the number of theatres — the Elizabethan and our own.

At this early period indeed the stage was almost the only form of general intellectual recreation. There were then no newspapers, no magazines, no novels as that term is now understood. Outside of the theater the entertainments were scanty which enabled the educated man of leisure to while away his time, or the man engrossed in business to occupy his leisure. There he would learn history; there he would find criticism; there he would hear comments on current events. In the Elizabethan age indeed men spent a certain portion of their time in listening to plays as they do now in reading novels or newspapers. The same variation in the matter to be heard was therefore just as important then as is now the variation in the matter to be read. Webster with some bitterness noted that people came to the theater with the same feelings which led "ignorant asses," as he called them, to ask of the stationers, not whether books were good for anything, but whether they were new.[1] The companies had of course a large stock of pieces always on hand. These they brought out as often as it was thought profitable or it became necessary. Still,

[1] Preface to play of 'The White Devil,' 1612.

in consequence of the relation in which they stood to the public, their attention was steadily directed to the production of new plays.

That this would be the case we might naturally assume from what has just been said; but the Diary of Henslowe furnishes a very striking illustration of its truth. Take for instance one period recorded — that from June 3, 1594, to May 27, 1596. In this the company or companies in which Henslowe had an interest were acting much the largest proportion of the time. The intervals in which no performances took place embraced about twenty weeks of the two years. During this period there were thirty-six new pieces brought out. Consequently a little more than sixteen days, including Sundays, was the average interval between the production of any two new dramas. This was probably the shortest time in which the parts could be learned by the actors and the stage properties procured and satisfactorily put in order. The average interval, be it remembered, not the invariable one. This was sometimes much less. For instance between the fourth and the thirtieth of December, 1596, Henslowe records the production of four new pieces, and of three between the seventh and the twenty-ninth of April, 1597.

We can therefore understand that the demand for new plays at the various theatres must have been inordinately great. This in part accounts for the large number who entered upon the profession of playwriting as a livelihood. There were, first, the regular writers for the stage, whose position had become established, and who were not unfrequently paid as fast as they furnished copy, and

sometimes doubtless before they had contributed a line. But besides these, pressed steadily on a continually recruited crowd of hungry aspirants, all eager to enter upon the same career. Graduates of the universities abandoned their destined professions with the hope of gaining distinction, if not support, by this means. The actors themselves, belonging to the companies, sometimes added to their legitimate business the composition of the very pieces they had a part in performing. No one needs to be told that of this body of dramatic writers Shakespeare is the great exemplar; but there is plenty of evidence also that several successful playwrights of that time had been originally unsuccessful players. In truth, with all classes of men with whom it was not a vocation, writing for the stage was more or less an avocation; just as at the present time every man of literary pursuits, no matter what his special profession, writes to a certain extent for the press, while a more limited number of these, who would never think of calling themselves novelists, devote a portion of their time to the composition of fictitious narrative.

In consequence of the great demand for plays the position of a writer for the stage was one of considerable importance and even of emolument as literary productions were then paid. Men who were successful dramatic poets became objects of contention with the managers of rival theaters, full as much as and probably more than at the present time popular authors are with publishers. That such should be the case would be a natural inference; but we have occasionally direct evidence of the fact. It is distinctly referred to as something thoroughly

established in Ben Jonson's play of 'The Alchemist,' which was brought out in 1610. In it one of the characters celebrates the luck in gaming which the other is destined to receive through the magic arts of the alchemist. To illustrate his consequent popularity he uses the following comparison:

> "You shall have your ordinaries bid for him,
> As playhouses for a poet;"

an ordinary at that period combining the characteristics of an eating-house and of a gambling-saloon.

In fact a successful dramatic author of the age of Elizabeth was under full as much pressure as is the editor of a newspaper now. As it was frequently out of the power of one man to produce plays as fast as they were needed, it was not at all uncommon — in fact, it was an established custom — for the theater to have several writers working on the same production at the same time. Henslowe's 'Diary' is full of examples of this practice. There are nearly one hundred and fifty plays of which he records the payments made to authors. Of these much fewer than one half are the work of a single person. Two or three writers are usually engaged upon the same production, and the number at times rises to four, five, and even six. For instance, in June, 1600, payments were made to Munday, Drayton, Hathway, Dekker, Chettle, and Day for their work upon a play styled 'Fair Constance of Rome.' In the case of another play, entitled 'Cæsar's Fall,' — the composition of which belongs to May, 1600, — Henslowe leaves us to imagine, if we choose, an indefinitely large number of authors.

He records the payment of a certain sum to Munday, Drayton, Webster, Middleton, and then, as if tired of further enumeration, lumps any other composer or composers under the general title of "the rest." This was no uncommon proceeding on his part. Nothing exceptional in his management led him to record details such as these. It was clearly the general practice. Certainly a very large proportion of the plays of that period which have come down to modern times are the work of two or more hands.

But while this is undoubtedly true, the amount of work performed by individual writers is something enormous, if we look at the matter from the modern point of view. Thomas Heywood has already been mentioned as having asserted in 1633 that he had written at that time all or most of two hundred and twenty plays. It is to be borne in mind that dramatic composition was but one form of his many-sided literary activity, which swept through the whole range of prose and verse. Heywood, it must be added, is usually spoken of as being especially prolific. That he was a prolific author, one of the most so of his age, there is no question. Still, the belief that he was exceptionally so in the matter of play-writing seems to rest mainly upon this incidental and accidental statement of the number of pieces in which up to the year mentioned he had had the entire or main hand. The examples previously given of the number in which Chettle and Dekker had been concerned during a very limited period, to say nothing of others that could be cited, show that his rate, if not his amount of production, was by no means unexampled.

Excessive production necessarily implies haste in composition. The latter was characteristic of the period. Lyly portrayed the practice of the dramatists in choice euphuistic phrase. "Our travails," said he, "are like the hare's, who at one time bringeth forth, nourisheth and engendereth again; or like the brood of Trochilus whose eggs in the same moment they are laid bear birds."[1] There were doubtless some who either from choice or necessity wrote deliberately. But to this slowness there attached, in the minds of many if not of most, a certain discredit. Of all the dramatists of the Elizabethan age Ben Jonson seems the only one who consistently spent any amount of time and toil upon the composition of his works. The constant references made by his contemporaries and immediate successors to the care he bestowed upon his writings show that this was almost a distinctive peculiarity. By his rivals and enemies he was not unfrequently taunted with his slowness of production. We know from the Induction to his comedy of 'The Poetaster' that he was engaged for fifteen weeks in the composition of that piece, which was mainly an attack upon two brother dramatists whom he represented in person upon the stage. In the reply which was made he was twitted with the length of time it had taken him to lay this cockatrice's egg before cackling.

From the modern point of view fifteen weeks would certainly not be looked upon as a specially long time for the production of a well-wrought dramatic work. Yet Jonson himself, in spite of the contempt he must have felt for the frequently too fatal facility of his con-

[1] Prologue to 'Campaspe.'

temporaries, could not free himself altogether from the influence of the sentiment prevailing in his day. In the prologue to 'Volpone,' brought out in 1605, he referred to the fact that envious criticism twitted him with spending about a year in the composition of a play. Of the piece in question, one of his very best efforts, he said, in reply, that it had not been thought of two months before, that it had been written in five weeks, and that in it he had had the help of no coadjutor. Webster, too, showed something of the same sensitiveness on this same point. "To those who report," he said in his preface to 'The White Devil,' "I was a long time in finishing this tragedy, I confess I do not write with a goose-quill winged with two feathers."

Rapidity of production was, therefore, so far from being uncommon or remarkable during the Elizabethan period that it was strictly a necessity of the situation. Men of that day wrote against time very much as a modern editor does now who has to furnish a certain amount of copy at a specified hour. A particular play was to be brought out on a particular date. It was furnished to the actors as fast as it could be written. Such a course of proceeding naturally left little time or opportunity for revision. This was something that in any proper sense of the word plays could not receive unless they proved so popular as to be performed frequently. In such a case they often passed in all probability through what may be called several editions, in which alterations, important and unimportant, would to some extent be made. But the general rule was that plays were written hurriedly. We all know the statement of the editors of the

first folio of Shakespeare's dramatic works in regard to his swiftness of production. "His mind and hand went together," say they, "and what he thought, he uttered with such rapidity that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." This commendation met the censure of Ben Jonson, who spoke of it as praise given to the poet for the particular in which he was most at fault. When the players mentioned it to the honor of Shakespeare that in his writing, whatsoever he penned he never blotted out a line, "my answer hath been," said he, "Would he had blotted out a thousand!"

Whatever we may think of the abstract justice of Jonson's criticism, it is clear from the facts already stated that in this respect Shakespeare did not differ much, if at all, from the vast majority of contemporary dramatic authors. In truth, what is essentially the same statement is made about Fletcher by Humphrey Mosely, the publisher of the Beaumont and Fletcher folio of 1647. "Whatever I have seen of Mr. Fletcher's own hand," he wrote, "is free from interlining; and his friends affirm he never writ any one thing twice. It seems he had that rare felicity to prepare and perfect all first in his own brain; to shape and attire his notions, to add or lop off, before he committed one word to writing, and never touched pen till all was to stand as firm and immutable as if engraven in brass or marble." But this characteristic, so far from being rare, was the rule and not the exception, though the resulting so-called felicity was often a long way from being felicitous. The work which the playwright engaged to produce was usually furnished at the most rapid possible rate. Once

paid for, the author did not in general trouble himself any further about the fate of his compositions. Those productions which we now look upon as the glory of English literature were then often regarded as being possessed of nothing more than an ephemeral interest. This statement will not apply to everything and every one; but it is a fair representation of the view commonly held.

CHAPTER II

ATTITUDE TOWARDS PLAYS OF THE PLAYWRIGHTS

The facts given in the preceding chapter fairly compel the belief that the fertility of the Elizabethan age in the production of stage plays was as remarkable as is our own in the production of novels. Of a large proportion of these pieces it is mainly owing to accident that the titles have been preserved. The number of them of which not even so much as the name has come down, we can guess at, but we can never get beyond a guess. Most records have disappeared entirely; those which have been saved are imperfect as well as scanty. Nor can we satisfactorily free ourselves from the conviction that destruction has taken place on a grand scale by seeking refuge in the boundless possibilities of what may have been; by persuading ourselves that some play which has survived is the exact representative or later form of some other play of which everything has vanished but the title. All such assumptions, where evidence is wanting, are worthless. In the search for material, in which the Elizabethan dramatists ransacked ancient and modern history, early legend, and later romance, the field of contemporary fact as well as of fiction, it was inevitable that at times they should strike, intentionally or unintentionally, not merely upon

subjects near allied, but even upon the very same subjects. Henslowe's Diary shows us that 'Ferrex and Porrex', the title of the first English tragedy which has been preserved, was also the title of one by Haughton which has disappeared. It further informs us that the 'Troilus and Cressida' of Shakespeare had been preceded in 1599 by a piece with the same name written by Dekker and Chettle, of which not a vestige remains. A like statement can be made as to Thomas Nobbes' tragedy of 'Hannibal and Scipio,' published in 1637. Early in 1601 Henslowe had brought out a play with that title, written by Hathway and Rankins.

It is probable indeed that nearly all the very best pieces then produced have come down to us. It is permissible, however, to feel regret for the loss of some. Among the more than fifty manuscript plays [1] which fell a sacrifice to the zeal of Warburton's cook in the making of pies, are about a dozen of Massinger's. Of these, two have since been printed,— one, to be sure, a fragment,— four are pretty surely lost, and the rest probably so; though unlimited conjecture strives to discern them as existing possibly under some other names. But besides them, there perished in this ignominious way four ascribed to Ford, two to Chapman, one each to Greene, to Cyril Tourneur, to Middleton, to Dekker, to Marlowe and Day conjointly, and various ones written by authors either less known or utterly unknown. Even three which thus ignobly disappeared were attributed to Shakespeare. We need not fear that English litera-

[1] See the list in the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' vol. lxxxv. pp. 217–222, of part ii., September, 1815; also p. 424.

ture has suffered any severe loss by the destruction of these last. Still one cannot well repress a feeling of curiosity as to the precise nature of the pieces which even the idlest conjecture of the past deemed itself warranted in imputing to the great dramatist, or intentional fraud included among his works.

It is no difficult matter to discover the reason which led to the extensive production of plays. But the agencies which brought about their extensive disappearance do not lie so distinctly on the surface. If this sort of literary creation was so popular why is it that so comparatively little of it has been preserved? This is a question which confronts the student of the period every time the contrast presents itself between the great number of plays which we know the individual dramatist to have written and the few of his which have come down. Fortunately for us it has been answered by one of the Elizabethans themselves. Mention has already been made of the play of 'The English Traveller.' In the address to the reader which constitutes its preface, Heywood, in remarkable but never sufficiently remarked words, reveals the principal agencies which swept out of existence so large a proportion of the pieces then written for the stage. He is explaining why so few of the two hundred and twenty in which he had been concerned had been printed. "True it is," he wrote, "that my plays are not exposed to the world in volumes, to bear the titles of Works (as others). One reason is that many of them by shifting and changing of companies have been negligently lost; others of them are still retained in the hands of some actors who think

it against their peculiar profit to have them come in print; and a third that it was never any great ambition in me in this kind to be voluminously read."

In the passage just given we have succinctly stated the three causes which led to the destruction which overtook the dramatic literature of the Elizabethan period. The first, due to carelessness, belongs to the class of fatalities to which manuscript is liable at all times and under all conditions. Its operations have necessarily not been confined to the age in which Heywood flourished. But the second reason was peculiar to the period. This was the unwillingness of companies to have plays printed which they were in the habit of acting. The existence of this feeling might have fairly been inferred from the sudden cessation which took place after 1600 of the previously rapid publication of Shakespeare's productions. In that one year appeared six of his plays. After that date but five additional pieces came out during his lifetime; and of these five, one was 'Pericles,' and another a mangled and imperfect copy of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor.' It is a natural if not necessary supposition that the company which claimed his pieces as their own property took steps to prevent proceedings which, as they knew or fancied, would lower for their purposes their pecuniary value.

There is more direct testimony. Disregarding two plays of Shakespeare which were early entered for publication but were never published until 1623, the circumstances connected with the appearance of 'Troilus and Cressida' supply what may be deemed convinc-

ing evidence upon this very point. That piece was entered in February, 1603, on the registers of the Stationers' Company by James Roberts. But a significant qualification was added. It was to be printed by him "when he hath gotten sufficient authority for it." Apparently this sufficient authority was never secured. At any rate the work was not brought out until 1609 and then it came from another house. Most remarkable is the publisher's preface to one of his two quartos of that year, both for the testimony it bore to the lofty estimate in which Shakespeare's productions were then held and for the prophecy, now essentially fulfilled, that when he was gone and his plays were out of sale, there would be a scramble for them so great that it would necessitate for their procurement the setting up of an English Inquisition. More significant for us in the matter under consideration are the congratulations expressed for the escape into print of this particular play and the charge, by implication, that had it been left to "the grand possessors' wills" men should have prayed for the chance of reading his pieces instead of being prayed-for to buy them. Henslowe's Diary further contributes apparent proof of the opposition manifested by the companies to publication. Under date of March 19, 1600, there is a record of forty shillings to the printer to stay the printing of 'Patient Grissel.'

In truth, it is evident that the publication of a play by the author without the consent of the actors was looked upon by many as an immoral act, if indeed it could not be deemed an illegal one. Heywood is the dramatic writer of that period who in questions bearing

upon the theatrical situation gives us the fullest information as to the feelings and practices then prevalent. His 'Rape of Lucrece' first appeared in print in 1609. In the address to the reader prefixed to that tragedy he censured those who had, to employ his own words, "used a double sale of their labors, first to the stage and after to the press." He made it distinctly clear that such as adopted that course subjected themselves by the very act to the imputation of dishonesty. For himself, Heywood denied that he had ever been guilty of what he seemed to consider a sort of double-dealing in every sense of the term. He had always been faithful to the stage, he asserted, and took care to announce that the particular play, thus prefaced, came out by consent. The position taken by him may have represented a general feeling, but it could hardly have been a universal one. It was pretty certainly that which prevailed among the actors; but among the authors there must have been some, if not many, who dissented from it both in word and act.

It is plain that the opposition of the theatrical companies to the publication of the pieces they acted was an important agency in bringing about the destruction of plays. Still, in the last analysis the main cause that produced this result was the indifference of authors themselves to the fate of what they wrote. The third reason given by Heywood in the passage cited above, that it was never any great ambition in him in this kind to be voluminously read, furnishes a striking picture of the attitude of the men of that age towards the plays they produced. Such pieces were written simply to be

acted. With that all reason for the perpetuation of their existence ended. He who felt in that way was not likely to be solicitous about the future of what had already served fully the purpose for which it was created. Pieces written on the spur of the moment, and generally to supply the necessities of the moment, did not seem to their authors deserving of any special care for their preservation. The feeling showed itself even when there was a disposition to deny the justice of the contemptuous opinion entertained of productions of this nature. In the prologue to 'All Fools,' published in 1605, Chapman glanced sarcastically at the wits who, professedly aiming at higher objects, scorned to compose plays. Yet in the dedication of this very comedy to Sir Thomas Walsingham he says himself that he is most loath to pass the sight of his friend "with any such light marks of vanity." It is plain that Webster had, as there was reason to have, a good opinion of his tragedy of 'The White Devil.' Yet for publishing it he half apologized by saying that he claimed for himself merely the liberty which others before him had taken. "Not that I affect praise for it," he continued. He further conformed to a general sentiment, in which he did not at heart share, by applying to works of the kind he was producing the words of Martial, *Nos haec novimus esse nihil.*

The significance of such declarations as the foregoing cannot be mistaken. No better evidence can well be offered as to the little regard with which the most popular authors of the time looked upon their own dramatic productions. They are precisely of the kind which the

editor of a newspaper at the present day might make, when contrasting his regular daily articles, which had served their immediate purpose and to which he would attach no further importance, with some other work of his of an entirely different character in which he had embodied the results of earnest thought and ripened study. This feeling will serve to explain, at least in part, why so many of the stage plays printed came out anonymously, especially during the earlier periods. Their writers took little interest in them and felt no pride in acknowledging them. Undoubtedly such sentiments gradually tended to disappear with the fuller recognition that both writers and readers came to have of the value of this sort of literature. For the change of opinion Ben Jonson, it is safe to assert, was largely responsible. He had never shared in the depreciatory estimate which was taken by many of stage plays. As his reputation and authority increased, a wider currency was given and greater importance attached to his views. It is certainly significant that the four earliest quartos of Shakespeare — the five earliest, if we count 'Titus Andronicus' — were not published with his name. After the appearance of this on 'Love's Labor's Lost,' in 1598, it was thenceforth generally attached to the pieces he wrote and also to some he did not write; for by that time it had attained and henceforth retained a commercial value which publishers did not fail to recognize.

The prevalence of this comparatively disparaging opinion entertained of their productions by playwrights themselves is of course true only in a general sense. To it there were inevitably exceptions. Against the

universality of indifference to the fate of their pieces either the vanity or the just self-appreciation of individual writers could be trusted to militate, as well as the interest taken by the public in particular plays. There are always authors to whom even the meanest of their productions will seem worthy of preservation. Such a feeling would naturally be intensified in the case of works which not only they themselves regarded as good, but were so regarded by those for whose opinion they had respect. Both these agencies doubtless contributed to the publication of a number of dramas during the Elizabethan period. The request of friends, later often a fictitious pretext, was a very genuine motive for such action in the early part of the seventeenth century. Chapman in the dedication of his comedy of 'The Widow's Tears,' which appeared in 1612, said, and unquestionably said truly, that many desired to see it printed. This particular reason for publication which he chanced to avow was certainly one of the unavowed reasons that led others to follow the same course.

There was indeed a constant demand on the part of the public for the privilege of reading the plays which they had seen acted, or which they had heard spoken of with praise by those who had seen them acted. If the writer was unwilling or unable to respond to this desire, publishers could be found who undertook to gratify it by any means that lay in their power. This was what led then to the frequent piracy of popular dramatic productions. Every effort, legitimate or illegitimate, was put forth to secure them for

the press. They were taken down in the imperfect shorthand of the period. They were set forth to sale so full of blunders and absurd readings that the author himself was often ashamed to acknowledge them as his own. Fears of the mutilation his plays would thus undergo must have constantly haunted the heart of every dramatist who was honestly solicitous for his own reputation. It sometimes urged him to print what otherwise would have been left undisturbed in manuscript. Chapman, in the dedication of his comedy of 'All Fools,' spoke of it as "the least allowed birth of my shaken brain." Yet he caused it to be brought out

> "Lest by others' stealth it be impressed,
> Without my passport, patched by others' wit."

If the fear of what might be done led the author at times to publish his plays, the same result would occasionally be brought about by his resentment of what had been done. He would find saddled upon him a play of his own, to be sure, but in so corrupt a condition that as a matter of self-defence he felt obliged to bring out a corrected copy. There is satisfactory evidence as to the indignation felt by the writers of that time at these pirated publications, against which they apparently had no remedy. Heywood commented upon an outrage of this kind in a prologue, spoken at the last revival before its publication in 1605, of an early dramatic production of his entitled, 'If you Know not Me, you Know Nobody.' He severely censured the play with this name that was then in circulation. He spoke of it as "the most corrupted copy now imprinted, which was published without his consent." Its exist-

ence was due, he tells us, to the success the piece met with on its original representation. This was so great

> "that some by stenography drew
> The plot, put it in print, scarce one word true:
> And in that lameness it hath limpt so long,
> The author now to vindicate that wrong
> Hath took the pains upright upon its feet
> To teach it walk."

Reasons of a similar sort he gave for printing 'The Rape of Lucrece.' "Some of my plays," he wrote, "have, unknown to me, and without any of my direction, accidentally come into the printer's hands, and therefore so corrupt and mangled (copied only by the ear) that I have been as unable to know them as ashamed to challenge them." This particular one he was more willing, in consequence, to bring out in its proper garb, inasmuch as "the rest have been so wronged in being published in such savage and ragged ornaments." It is not impossible, indeed, that the pirated 'Romeo and Juliet' of 1597 led the author to consent to the publication of the 1599 quarto of the same tragedy.

But after all, publication of plays was the exception and not the rule. The combined effects of the various agencies mentioned brought to the press only a very limited number of the many produced. However eager might be the demand for their perusal in special cases, it is clear that both in the eyes of readers, and even of their own composers, dramatic productions were not regarded as being of much intrinsic value. They existed for no higher object than the entertainment of

the passing moment. This view, largely held, as we have seen, by the playwrights themselves, was one which met the full concurrence of the critical public. The pieces when printed were read with eagerness; but they were not often read with the respect given to other and often far feebler works. There is, indeed, a curious parallel between the attitude taken towards the drama by the men of the latter years of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, and the attitude taken towards the novel by the men of the latter part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Readers of 'Northanger Abbey' will remember how bitterly Miss Austen resented the disparagement of works of fiction which it was then the fashion to entertain and express. There was ample reason for the protest she made.

But little of the uncompromising spirit shown by Miss Austen in the defence of the novel was displayed by the dramatists of the Elizabethan age when speaking in behalf of their own productions. In the dedications of the plays they published there is not unfrequently an apologetic tone, as if it were rather a presumption on the part of the author to offer to his patron a work in itself of so slight value and in general so slightly regarded. They were wont to hold up the practice of persons in stations of authority as proof that it was not deemed beneath the dignity of the high-born to bestow their countenance upon what was looked upon by large numbers as something essentially frivolous. Ancient rulers were sometimes summoned to enforce this view; but the example of the Italian princes was the one most

commonly cited. Their willingness to receive into favor pieces of this character was the bulwark behind which the playwright was ordinarily disposed to shield himself. That he felt the need of some such protection is manifest. Chapman's dedication of his comedy of 'The Widow's Tears' exhibits in the most marked manner the hesitating attitude assumed by authors themselves in regard to pieces written for the stage. "Other countrymen," he wrote, "have thought the like worthy of dukes' and princes' acceptations. *Injusti Sdegnii*, *Il Pentamento Amorose*, *Calisthe*, *Pastor Fido*, and so forth (all being but plays), were all dedicate to princes of Italy." There is a further distinct reference to the low estimation in which dramatic productions were generally held in the reflection with which Chapman went on to comfort himself. This was to the effect that the free judgment of his patron "weighs nothing by the name or form or any vain estimation of the vulgar; but will accept acceptable matter as well in plays as in many less materials masking in more serious titles."

Sentiments of a similar nature continued to find expression down almost to the closing of the theaters. They can be seen, for illustration, in the dedications prefixed respectively to Massinger's 'Duke of Milan,' printed in 1623, and in his 'New Way to Pay Old Debts,' printed in 1632; in those prefixed to Heywood's 'English Traveller,' and in his 'Love's Mistress,' belonging respectively to 1633 and 1636; and in the dedication of Ford's 'Fancies Chaste and Noble,' published in 1638. The general tone pervading these later dedications, when they touched upon this point, is indicated by

that accompanying Dekker's tragi-comedy of 'Match Me in London.' This was brought out in 1631. His patron, he says, is also a chorister in the choir of the muses. "Nor is it any over-daring in me," he added, "to put a play-book into your hands being a courtier. Roman poets did so to their emperors, the Spanish now to their grandees, the Italians to their illustrissimos, and our own nation to the great ones." Upon modern ears the deprecatory state of mind thus indicated will make the greatest impression in the dedication of the Shakespeare folio of 1623 to the earls of Pembroke and of Montgomery. The editors humbly admitted that when they took into consideration the high positions held by their patrons, they could not but know that their dignity was too great to descend to the reading of such trifles.

This apologetic attitude, this implied disparagement of dramatic literature, was by no means confined to the dedications prefixed to plays. Were such the case, it might be pleaded that these were purely conventional utterances. Though they really meant a good deal, a plausible argument could be made that they meant nothing. But no such explanation will serve for similar opinions about these productions which at times found independent expression. In Heywood's address to the reader which has been quoted, it is noticeable that he makes a somewhat disparaging reference to the fact that the plays of others had been collected and brought out in volumes.[1] It is not the only place where he comments upon this procedure. In 1631, two years before the appearance of 'The English Traveller,' he published his

[1] See page 28.

'Fair Maid of the West.' In the preface he expressed his sentiments in regard to the collections of dramatic productions which had then come out.. "Virtuous reader," he remarks, "my plays have not been exposed to the public view of the world in numerous sheets and a large volume, but singly, as thou seest, with great modesty and small noise." It is clear that the epithet of "virtuous," which he bestowed upon his reader, Heywood in his secret heart felt belonged strictly to himself. He was contemplating with satisfaction and approval his own conduct. One gets from his words the impression that in his eyes it partook somewhat of presumption to publish a play at all. Still, it is implied that if a man contented himself with bringing out a single one, and did not go so far as to stuff a volume with a number of them, he could be pardoned for the offence. In such a case it was not a serious trespass; it was only a peccadillo. There were but two authors against whom the censure here indicated could have been levelled. These were Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. The only collections that had yet appeared were of their works.

But there was a sneer conveyed in Heywood's further remark that his plays did not bear the title of 'Works.' This can refer but to one man. There may have been some and even many who felt then just as did Ben Jonson. But of all the dramatic writers of that time, if we draw our inferences merely from words and acts, he is the only one who seems to have had a full conception of the dignity of his profession, or any solicitude about the future of his plays. In his eyes the writings of the poets were, to use his own language, "the fountains and

first springs of wisdom." In season and out of season, he lost no opportunity to assert their claims to the highest recognition. In none of his dedications can be found the least trace of the feeling that the gift was unworthy the acceptance of any friend or patron whatever. In accordance with this conviction the first collected edition of his writings, consisting mainly of dramas, bore the title of 'Works.' It appeared in 1616. No claim so audacious for productions of this character had ever been put forth before. It confounded both friends and enemies. For a long time his conduct had no imitators; at least, whatever imitation there was came from publishers and not from authors. The title-page of the folio of 1623 bears simply the words 'Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies Histories and Tragedies,' though on one of the inner title-pages, removed from general attention, 'The Works of Shakespeare' is put down in addition. 'Works' was prefixed for a purpose to the Marston volume of 1633; but the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio of 1647 bore the title of 'Comedies and Tragedies'; that of 1679, of 'Fifty Comedies and Tragedies.'

At the present time we can hardly understand the feeling which would deny the title of 'Works' to dramas like those of Jonson, and give it without grudging to dry and commonplace treatises upon matters in which the human mind has now lost all the little interest it ever had. But it was then a very genuine and earnest feeling. Jonson was unsparingly ridiculed even by men of his own profession for calling his plays 'Works.' The wonder at the boldness of it lasted long after his death. It took indeed many years to reconcile the minds of men

to the extreme position that trifles so slight in character should receive so dignified a name. As late as 1659, Thomas Pecke, in an epigram addressed to Davenant, referred to Jonson as

> "That Ben, whose head deserved the Roscian bays,
> Was the first gave the name of works to plays." [1]

In this instance the author goes on to add that the merit of the writings justified the use of such a term. But this was not, or at least had not been the general opinion. By the majority the title of 'Works' was regarded as a presumptuous application of the word to things which were simply designed to live their little day and then be forgotten.

Jonson had defied not merely public opinion, but the opinion of the men of his own profession in collecting his plays and setting them forth in a single large volume. It is certainly an allowable suggestion, if it be not deemed a probable supposition, that it was the publication by him of the folio of 1616 that led, or at least encouraged Heming and Condell to bring out the Shakespeare folio of 1623. Jonson's action had been unprecedented. It had met with a criticism which might well have deterred imitation. But the growing influence of the man who was making his way to the position of acknowledged autocrat of letters could hardly have failed to affect the course of the friends and fellows of the man who, while he had been living, had been regarded as the supreme dramatist of his time. Still the practice never became general. The example of Jonson was but little followed in his own age; in no instance

[1] British Bibliographer, vol. ii. p. 312.

was it followed by a single one of the dramatists themselves. It was his old comrades who brought out Shakespeare's plays; it was a business enterprise that led to the only other undertaking of the sort which was attempted in the seventeenth century. Beaumont had been in his grave more than thirty years and Fletcher more than twenty before any volume containing their pieces appeared. Massinger was the next of the Elizabethans whose complete works were brought out; but it was not till 1759 that this task was accomplished. No edition of the writings of any early Elizabethan dramatist, besides these mentioned and Lyly's, made its appearance until the nineteenth century.

The facts here given, the opinions here recorded make one point perfectly clear. They demonstrate distinctly the truth of the proposition with which the discussion of the subject opened. Much which is often reckoned as peculiar to Shakespeare was common. Much which has seemed strange in his attitude towards his own works was nothing more than the attitude of practically all his contemporaries. The further and final question now arises. Did Shakespeare himself share in the estimate of the value of dramatic production entertained generally by the men of his time and even by the men of his own profession? Was his conduct influenced by the feelings largely prevalent in his own class? As this is a matter which can never be determined decisively, the opportunity for argument is endless, and the conclusions reached will be pretty sure to vary with the predispositions or prejudices with which the inquiry is begun. Nothing more will be attempted here than to

state as briefly and as fairly as possible the leading considerations on both sides.

On the surface everything seems to indicate that Shakespeare held the view expressed by Heywood in regard to pieces written for stage representation as opposed to that entertained by Jonson. If we judge his opinions by his conduct there would hardly seem any question at all. We might indeed go further and feel ourselves justified in maintaining that, like so many of his class, he was indifferent to the fate which might befall his plays; that he did not look upon them as serious performances, and that he had little belief in their essential greatness and little confidence in their perpetuity. We should have the further right to infer that he reckoned his two principal poems as superior to his dramatic productions, at least to his first dramatic productions. As early as 1592, we know from the pamphlet which Robert Greene wrote upon his deathbed that the theatrical companies were turning aside from other playwrights to secure the services of Shakespeare. Something therefore he must have accomplished by that time to have made him so general an object of popular favor. Yet, in the dedication to the Earl of Southampton of his 'Venus and Adonis,' published in 1593, he declared that poem to be "the first heir of his invention." By itself the remark may be explained without implying that he was expressing a comparatively disparaging opinion of the dramatic pieces he had up to that time produced. Still, this is its natural interpretation.

Furthermore it is an interpretation in full harmony

with the course of conduct he pursued in regard to his plays. Of these, seventeen appeared in some form during his lifetime; if we include 'Pericles,' eighteen. Certain of these were brought out in so imperfect and indeed so atrociously mangled a state that it is quite impossible to suppose that they were subjected to the revision of Shakespeare or for that matter to the revision of any one. Nor in the case of the best of the quartos is there any evidence that he was privy to their publication. This attitude of indifference is made more striking by the fact that nineteen of his dramas never saw the light till after their author's death. Consequently Shakespeare was so far from supervising the printing of more than half of his plays, that he never saw them in any printed form whatever. It cannot be maintained that he was prevented by stress of circumstances or by hurry of business from attending to their publication. He left London, it is generally believed, and took up his residence at Stratford somewhere about 1611. There he led, so far as we can discover, the life of a country gentleman. He interested himself in local affairs. He was concerned either for or against the enclosure of the common lands of Welcombe. He entertained the clergyman at New Place and saw to it that he was furnished with a quart of sack and a quart of claret. He bought and sold property. To his material possessions he attended with circumspection and diligence. But as to what became of those productions which we now regard as the culminating effort of English genius, he seems not to have felt the slightest sort of anxiety or have given himself the slightest sort of trouble. It is accord-

ingly manifest from the course he pursued that Shakespeare felt and consequently acted as did in general the other dramatists of his time.

So much for the arguments which are adduced to support this view. But there are considerations which lead to a conclusion directly opposite. It is hardly conceivable, in the first place, that Shakespeare could have been unaware of his own greatness. He certainly could not have been unconscious of his superiority in that one form of literary production which, however lightly esteemed by the critical and the learned, appealed nevertheless most potently to the taste of both the educated and the uneducated multitude. Had he felt any doubt upon the subject, the general estimate which had made him as much the favorite of his own age as he has become the admiration of the ages which have followed, would have disabused his mind of any such notion. Furthermore, he could not have failed to observe that his dramatic production, so far as it was printed, met with as much favor in the closet as it did on the stage. There its success rivalled that of his two principal poems.

The facts in this matter which bibliography records are indeed well worth consideration. The age of Shakespeare was not one in which the English language, with what it contained and conveyed, stood high in the estimation of scholars. Francis Meres gives us a glimpse of the feelings of such men in the list he furnishes of the principal literatures of the world. These according to him were eight in number. It is noticeable that while Italian, French, and Spanish are specified, English

is not included. The population of the kingdom too was then far from large, nor was education widely diffused. There was in consequence, as contrasted with our own times, a very limited number of persons to read anything; of this limited class, there was then, as always, a comparatively insignificant number to read poetry. Yet before his death Shakespeare had seen his play of 'Richard II.,' first printed in 1597, pass through four editions; his play of 'Richard III.,' which appeared the same year, pass through five; and his first part of 'Henry IV.,' which came out the same year, pass also through five. Between 1600 and 1608 inclusive the pirated copy of 'Henry V.,' went through three editions. Three and possibly four were also the number of impressions of 'Romeo and Juliet' before 1616, if we reckon among them the imperfect pirated quarto of 1597. Again, if we include the copy of the first form of 'Hamlet,' printed in 1603, that play by 1611 had passed through four editions and possibly five. This continued popularity with the reading public exhibited no signs of abatement during Shakespeare's life. The editions which followed make it clear that it did not cease with his death. No other dramatist of that early period can show any such record. Shakespeare would have been singularly obtuse had he failed to recognize his own popularity, and singularly self-depreciatory had he been disposed to look upon it as unworthily bestowed.

There is not only no evidence that he had any such disposition, but whatever evidence there is tends to inspire the contrary belief. True it is he did not publish his own dramatic works. But that is far more likely to

have been due to the consideration he entertained for the feelings of others than to any disparaging opinion he held of the value of his dramatic productions or to indifference to their fate. As an actor he might naturally sympathize with the views about publication of the men of his profession, and he would be sure to respect what they deemed their rights. So long, therefore, as his associates regarded the printing of plays as being, in Heywood's phrase, "against their peculiar profit," he would refrain, whatever were his own opinion, from any undertaking that would threaten the value of what they considered their property. But this does not militate against the view that he contemplated the publication of his plays when with the lapse of time objections of this sort would inevitably lose all their potency. It is indeed a natural inference from the words of Heming and Condell that he purposed such action. It is indicated in the regret they express in the dedication of his works that it had not been his fate "to become the executor to his own writings." In the address to the readers they confess that it were worthy to have been wished that the author had lived to oversee his own productions, and that it was to be lamented that he had been "by death departed from that right." Such words do not prove that Shakespeare intended to bring out an edition of his plays; but they suggest, if they do not imply, that it was a project he had entertained.

Such, in brief, are the arguments on both sides. But if it were ever Shakespeare's intention to publish his works, we know too well that it was never carried out. His text therefore suffered from the same agencies which

impaired the correctness of nearly all the productions of the dramatists of that period. It was never subjected to any adequate revision, and assuredly not to its author's. It has come down to us, therefore, just as have the works written in the age of manuscript, in a condition more or less corrupt. To restore it, to bring it back to the state in which it came from the writer's hands, has been the task of centuries. The undertaking has been attended throughout with great friction; there are those who think its accomplishment, so far as it has been accomplished, has been largely due to this friction. Certain it is that the settlement of the text of Shakespeare has given rise to bitter quarrels, in which writers of the greatest eminence and scholars of the profoundest learning have taken part. To trace the various steps which have led to the breaking out of these controversies, and to record the events which marked the progress of the most famous one of them all will be the subject of the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

DIFFERENCES OF THE EARLY TEXTS

It is evident from the facts given in the preceding chapter that, whatever may have been Shakespeare's individual sentiments, his practice conformed to that of his contemporaries. The same agencies which affected the conduct of his brother dramatists and the fortunes of what they wrote operated also more or less upon him and his works. As they revised and recast previous pieces, so did he. As they entered into partnership with other writers in the composition of plays, so did he. As their productions have come down to us in varying degrees of textual excellence, or as it might sometimes seem, of textual corruption, so have his. As some of theirs have been lost, it is to be feared that some of his may have suffered the same fate. We know from Meres that a play of his called 'Love 's Labor 's Won,' had been produced before 1598. It is a title that would serve for a large majority of all the comedies which have ever been written. Conjecture finds it still existing in several of his pieces which go under other names, notably in 'All 's Well that Ends Well.' This may be so; we can never be absolutely sure that it is so. One thing is fairly certain. Had not Heming and Condell performed the pious duty of collecting and printing

the works of their old comrade, we are more than likely to have missed seeing some of the dramas which made their appearance in the folio of 1623; and included in the list of those then first published are such tragedies as 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Antony and Cleopatra,' 'Coriolanus,' and 'Macbeth,' and such comedies as 'Twelfth Night,' 'As You Like It,' 'The Winter's Tale,' and 'The Tempest.'

We can never form a correct estimate of the difficulties which beset the establishment of the text of Shakespeare, or discern clearly the causes which have brought about the diversities that prevail in different editions until we have mastered the conditions which from the outset have confronted and still confront him who assumes the office of editor. Let us gain in the first place a full understanding of the situation. The plays which are attributed to Shakespeare in modern editions are usually thirty-seven. Besides these there have been occasionally added to the list two — 'Edward III.' and 'The Two Noble Kinsmen' — in which he is thought by some to have borne a part. But the number just given is the one ordinarily found. Of these thirty-seven, all, with the exception of 'Pericles,' appeared in this first collected edition. In it they are printed with varying degrees of accuracy. None of them indeed could be expected to show the perfect state in which a work is presumably found that has been subjected to the author's own revision. Still, some of them present a text which, comparatively speaking, may be called good. But while this is true of individual plays, it must be said of the folio of 1623 that as a whole the work is very care-

lessly printed, in an age where careful printing was a duty not often taken very seriously.

Were we indeed to confine ourselves to the condition in which certain of the plays appear, it would be well within the limits of legitimate vituperation to call the proof-reading abominable. The punctuation in fact tends at times to create the impression that there was no proof-reading at all. In the exhibition made of this the disorder occasionally swells into a wild riot. Semicolons exchange places with interrogation points, and periods appear in the middle of sentences. In the case of commas especially, the lawlessness displayed by the type-setters would give exaggerated conceptions of human depravity to certain men of our day who seem to look upon the particular punctuation they employ as being somehow divinely inspired. Commas turn up in the folio of 1623 in the most unexpected and surprising places. They appear to have been regarded as a general representative of all the other points; for they not unfrequently do duty for colons, semicolons, and periods. Moreover, while they often appear in places where they have no business whatever to be, they are just as often absent from places where their presence is desirable if not essential.

Still, many of the most important defects of this edition cannot be laid to the score of punctuation, even though, in consequence of the way it has been done, sentences are sometimes run together, or on the contrary are broken up into meaningless parts. There are other characteristics which are just as bad, and some which are much worse. Of the former we have an example in the

not unfrequent printing of verse as prose or of the arrangement of the verse in lines by which the proper measure is destroyed. Of the latter are the defects which disturb or destroy the sense. Words show themselves which are not known elsewhere to the speech. Again we meet with familiar words which in the place where they are found convey no meaning. In many cases it is easy to detect the blunder which caused the substitution of one term for another. Other readings present difficulties by no means easy to overcome; and there will be ample opportunity given later to observe how human ingenuity has been enabled to solve several of the most perplexing of these problems. But there remain and probably always will remain instances where the right reading will continue unsettled. The most famous single instance is perhaps the crux in 'Timon,' where the hero says to his servant, as the words appear in the original and only authority, —

> "Go, bid all my Friends againe,[1]
> Lucius, Lucullus, and Sempronius Vllorxa: All."

The chances are that the incomprehensible "Vllorxa" will furnish a subject for difference of opinion during all future time, as it has already in the past.

Here, then, we encounter the first difficulty in securing the ideal text. For thirty-six of the plays the folio of 1623 is a principal, if not the principal authority; for eighteen of the thirty-six it is practically the only authority. Yet it is a work which was printed with little if any editorial supervision and with no adequate proof-reading. It contains words that have never been

[1] Act iii., scene 4.

known to exist, and words used in senses they have never been known to have; sentences that have the double meaning of an oracle, and sentences that convey no meaning at all. Here we have at once opened before us a wide field for conjectural emendation, into which men with the least judgment have naturally rushed with the most audacity. Indeed, while the capability of the human mind to misunderstand what is plain and to interpret absurdly what is obscure has never been made the subject of exact scientific investigation, the most ample data for measuring and testing its powers in those directions can be gathered from the various proposals which have been made in all seriousness to correct the text of Shakespeare. But even under the most favorable conditions uniformity cannot be expected. In the case of two men of the same degree of cultivation, in whom unite fulness of knowledge and keenness of insight, differences of view depending upon the personal equation are sure to arise. There are passages where the right reading must rest upon conjecture; and conjecture implies variation of text. We can have sufficient confidence in the contrariety of human opinion and the perversity of human nature to feel absolute assurance that in cases of doubt the judgment of no one man will ever command the concurrence of all other men.

This is the first difficulty. A text has come down to us in the collected edition which in some instances is fairly good, in others more or less corrupt. But, as if this were not enough, a new element of disturbance thrusts itself in. Fifteen of these thirty-six plays had been published separately in quarto form before the

appearance of the folio of 1623. The originals out of which two more, included in that volume, had been built, had been also long in print. These plays brought out in quarto form sometimes went through several editions. The text of such varied naturally, to some extent, from each other; in two instances — 'Hamlet' and 'Romeo and Juliet' — they varied widely. The differences between these have therefore always to be considered. But behind this there is something more important still. Between the text as seen in a quarto and that of the same play in the folio there were frequently wide discrepancies. Passages found in the one would not appear in the other. Even entire scenes would be lacking. Between the reading contained in the same passages there would sometimes be great variations. Hence arose at once a conflict between the original authorities.

Heming and Condell, as is well known, attacked these quartos in the preface to the folio of 1623. They assured the reader that he had previously been "abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them." This was unquestionably true in some instances. These plays, they went on to say, were now offered to the view of men "cured and perfect of their limbs; and all the rest absolute in numbers as he" — that is, the author — "expressed them." They further implied, though they did not directly assert, that the text they gave was taken from the manuscript of Shakespeare himself. After reading assurances so promising, it is somewhat disheartening to contrast what they furnished with what they said they would furnish. In

spite of the impression they gave that they followed the reading of the original manuscripts, they printed several of the plays from the very quartos they denounced. In other cases the text of the quarto is as good as, if not superior to, that of the one they set forth. Hence we cannot assume that the folio represents the final reading which the author had chosen to adopt. In consequence it is not always easy to tell which in any given case is the better authority. If quartos and folios vary, the modern editions will be fairly sure to vary, one following in some instances the reading of the folio, the other that of the quarto.

The discrepancies between these early authorities are susceptible of easy explanation in the situation which then prevailed. The text printed would be taken from play-house copies. Between these there would be sure to spring up differences in process of time. The copies themselves, after having been furnished to the theater, would be subjected to any alterations which the author, in conjunction with the actors, might at different times think it desirable or essential to introduce. Scenes would be lengthened; scenes would be shortened; scenes would be thrown out altogether. But in addition the text would almost inevitably suffer from that depravation which every manuscript undergoes by the mere fact of its being a manuscript. Imperfect transcription, unintentional substitution would affect the language and often the meaning of passages. But besides these undesigned alterations changes were likely to be made in the course of time with which the author himself may have had nothing to do. Matter would be added as new

circumstances arose to suggest new allusions or appeal to new emotions. Other matter would be struck out for the sake of retrenching particular scenes or for any special reason connected with the exigencies of the theater on any particular occasion. Changes once made would stand a fair chance of being always retained. Agencies like these would always threaten the integrity of the text so long as its reproduction lay exclusively in the hands of copyists. Accordingly we can see that in dealing with certain of the plays of Shakespeare we are in the same situation as when dealing with the works of an ancient author of which several manuscripts exist, agreeing in the main but often differing widely in details. We can thereby get a glimpse of the nature of the problem which presents itself, as also of the difficulties of the task which requires us to reconstruct, out of the materials described, the genuine text.

Examples either of slight or gross corruptions caused by imperfect transcription of the copy sent to the press, or by the blunder of type-setters, need not detain us here. They will be found in profusion in the course of this volume. But there is a numerous class of petty discrepancies which demand recognition, though they deserve no extended notice. They result from the existence of two readings furnished by the original authorities, of which either makes perfectly good sense and would be accepted by all, were it not for the occurrence of the other. Out of scores and scores of instances that could be cited, take two perfectly well-known passages from 'Hamlet.' Before that play appeared in the folio of 1623, it was printed singly in quarto form in 1603, in 1604, in 1605, and in

1611. In the folios a well-known speech of Hamlet reads as follows:

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

But in all the quartos these same lines read:

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Did Shakespeare himself write *our* or *your?* Which is here the correct word? It is easy to see that this is a point upon which opinions are sure to divide. As a general rule, the mind of any particular person will be swayed, perhaps unconsciously, to prefer the form with which he has first chanced to become familiar.

Take again the two lines in the speech of the ghost, which in the quarto of 1603 and the folio of 1623 appear thus:

> "And each particular hair to stand on end,
> Like quills upon the fretful porpentine."

In the quartos of 1604, 1605, and 1611, "the fretful porpentine" is replaced by "the fearful porpentine." The same reason for disagreement in choice applies here as in the foregoing case. It is in differences of this sort that a large proportion of the variations between editions of Shakespeare consists. They are not important. Very rarely do they affect the sense seriously. But in conjunction with the other causes specified, they present an impassable barrier to uniformity of text. So potent are they that they not only affect the action of the men of different periods, but they affect the action of the same man at different periods of his own life. Successive edi-

tions of Shakespeare put forth by the same editor show frequent variations in the readings, due to change of opinion. So far, therefore, are we from having a text established which will command the assent of all men and of all time, that none has yet been produced which commands the assent of any one man at different times.

These are difficulties inherent in the nature of the matter to be edited. There have been and still continue to be obstacles in the way of uniformity arising from difference of judgment, of knowledge, and of taste in those who set out to edit. The language of the dramatist himself has contributed and still contributes to some extent to variation of text and misunderstanding of meaning. As a result of the changes which go on constantly in every speech, some of Shakespeare's words and the significations of other of his words have become obsolete. Here was and is a fruitful source of misapprehension and error. Another peril threatening the right reading was the change in grammatical forms and constructions. This is a difficulty even more formidable to overcome, and it has not been entirely removed even at the present day. It is not strange, in the little knowledge possessed by the first editors of the historic development of English speech, that they should have deemed Shakespeare guilty of bad grammar when he was simply conforming his usage to the grammar of his own time. Their poor opinion of his qualifications is not of consequence; but when the result of it causes disturbance of the text, it matters a good deal. To show how variations of reading arise from this ignorance, and how lines of linguistic investigation

converge in establishing the true one, can be brought out sharply by one notable illustration which concerns accidence.

Of the three leading dialects into which the English of English literature was early divided, that of the Midland has become the standard speech. In numerous ways, however, it has been affected by the dialects of the North and of the South, with which it came into contact on its two sides. Especially was this true of the former. In the illustration here chosen, the dialect of the Midland, especially of the East Midland — and in this instance of the Southern also — had in the third person singular of the present tense of the verb the termination *-th*. On the other hand, in the dialect of the North, this person ended in *-s*. Hence, in one part of the country men said "he doth," in another "he does." By the end of the sixteenth century the latter termination had been so successful in encroaching upon the one which was characteristic of the Midland that it had gained a recognized position in literature. The two endings flourished side by side. Shakespeare and his contemporaries used either indifferently. But since his day, the Northern form in *-s* has practically supplanted the Midland form in *-th*, both in the colloquial and the literary speech. The latter has been mainly kept alive, so far as it is alive, by its occurrence in the translation of the Bible, where it is the only form employed.

An altogether different story has to be told of the terminations of the plural in the same tense. In it could be included also the terminations of the second

person singular, which in the North was *-s* and in the Midland *-st*. In the latter dialect the plural ending of the present was *-en*. This after dropping its consonant became and has since remained the standard form in literature. The result had already been reached in Shakespeare's time. When the full form *-en* was employed, as frequently by Spenser, it was distinctly felt to be an archaism. The corresponding terminations of the plural were *-th* in the dialect of the South and *-s* in the dialect of the North. Both existed in the literature of Shakespeare's time, but only on a comparatively limited scale. The Southern plural in *-th* had but little recognition, though it survived in sporadic instances to a late period in the literature of the seventeenth century. The use of it by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, so far as it was used at all, was mainly confined to the words *hath* and *doth*. The northern plural in *-s* was, however, distinctly more common. Especially was this true of colloquial speech and of the literature which represents colloquial speech.

Our lack of familiarity with the extent of its employment is due to the fact that in modern editions of our earlier writers it has been reformed, wherever possible, out of the text, and replaced by the present grammatical terminations. In the Elizabethan period the ending may be said to have been making a struggle for establishment and general acceptance. But the fight was a losing one. No such good fortune attended it as befell its corresponding dialectic third person singular. Though met with a fair degree of frequency it is pretty certain that there were writers who were averse to employing it. Conse-

quently it tended to be more and more disused as time went on. By the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century it had largely disappeared as a recognized form. In Shakespeare's plays, as found in the first folio, it occurs about two hundred times. To make up this number are not included the frequent cases in which two nouns joined by a copulative conjunction appear as the subject of a verb in the third person singular. This usage common enough in Shakespeare and Milton, to say nothing of other authors, continues still to be employed by the best writers, though grammarians seem generally unaware of the fact.

When in the eighteenth century attention was directed to the text of Shakespeare, the existence of a third person plural in *-s* had come to be entirely forgotten. The termination in consequence, in spite of its frequency, was regarded as a mere blunder of the compositors. Whenever possible, it was quietly dropped. When this could not be done directly, changes were made in the structure of the sentence sufficient to allow it to be discarded. The practice began even as early as the second folio. In 'The Merchant of Venice,' for instance, where Shylock comments on Bassanio's unwillingness to have Antonio seal to the proposed bond, his words appear as follows in the original authorities, the two quartos of 1600, and the folio of 1623:

> "O father Abram, what these Christians are,
> Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect
> The thoughts of others."[1]

[1] Act i., scene 3.

Even at that early date *teaches* was apparently too much for the unknown corrector who made the alterations found in the folio of 1632. The meter, however, required a word of two syllables. So to bring about a more satisfactory condition of things, *dealings* was carefully changed into *dealing*, to the assumed benefit of the grammar and to the certain injury of the sense. So it continued until the time of Pope, who took another way out of the difficulty. After discarding the ending in *-s* he inserted a word of his own and made the line appear in this form:

"Whose own hard dealings teach them to suspect."

One of these two latter readings given was followed in every edition from the folio of 1632 to the edition of 1773. In this Steevens restored the only really authorized text. He doubtless considered it a grammatical blunder of the author's; but he was not so devoted to Shakespeare as to feel any regret at his having committed it.

But such instances were comparatively rare. Accordingly the doctrine of the innate and inordinate depravity of the Elizabethan printing-house was generally accepted as a sufficient explanation of the occurrence of the termination in *-s*. Even at this late day the view continues to find advocates. According to the belief of some, the type-setters of that early time had a wild desire to append the ending in *-s* to the plural form of the present tense on every slightest pretext. By the connivance or indifference of proof-readers this was permitted to remain. Successive editions perpetuated the original blunder. It is asking

rather too much of human credulity to accept the view that errors of this kind should not only be constantly perpetrated but should pass unchallenged and uncorrected in later editions. The truth is that the typesetters of the earlier period had the not uncommon fortune of knowing more about the grammatical usages of their own time than later commentators. There is no object indeed in retaining, when unnecessary, in modern texts, a form which survives only in the speech of the illiterate, and because of that fact would frequently jar upon the educated reader's enjoyment without affording any counterbalancing benefit. But while making the change it is not necessary to impute to grammatical inaccuracy upon the part of the author what is really due to the ignorance of the editor.

There are indeed places where change cannot be carried into effect. Passages exist where no linguistic surgery can repair the damage wrought to modern conceptions of grammar, nor can the burden be thrust upon the shoulders of the long-enduring compositor. The ryme requires imperatively the plural in *-s*. One of the lyrics in 'Cymbeline,' for instance, opens with the following lines:

> "Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
> And Phœbus 'gins arise,
> His steeds to water at those springs
> On chaliced flowers that lies."[1]

Here responsibility for the assumed singular but real plural *lies* cannot be imputed to any one but the author. To those unfamiliar with the language of the period only

[1] Act ii., scene 3.

one of two courses lay open. Shakespeare was either ignorant of grammar or defiant of it. His action was accordingly judged variously. By the sterner souls devoted to syntax he was censured for grammatical inaccuracy. By his thorough-going devotees he was commended for having risen superior to grammar. So great a genius as he was altogether above considerations so trivial. As a matter of fact, censure or praise was equally out of place. In employing *teaches* and *lies* and *cares* and numerous other words as plurals Shakespeare was merely conforming to an accepted grammatical usage of his time. In this particular his practice was largely the practice of his immediate predecessors and actual contemporaries. Undoubtedly the fashion of employing it was not followed by some and was fated to die out speedily. But that he could not know. Shakespeare is no more to be condemned for using the plural in *-s* than he is for using the singular; no more than would a writer of our time be exposed to the charge of being ungrammatical because he chose to employ *doth* instead of *does*.

Such examples of legitimate grammatical variation, often not understood, necessarily tended in the past to bring about variation in the editions of the poet. They moreover indicate the hopelessness of ever expecting absolute uniformity in the future. A further example drawn from the very construction just under consideration will suffice to show the differences that must inevitably manifest themselves when between two readings lies a choice dependent not so much upon the difference of meaning conveyed as upon the difference of

personal tastes in the editors. In the celebrated speech of Ulysses to Achilles in 'Troilus and Cressida,' he is represented in the folio of 1623 as saying, —

> "The welcome ever smiles,
> And farewells goes out sighing." [1]

In the quarto edition of the same play *farewells* appears as *farewell*. Consequently in one authority *goes* is a plural, in the other it is a singular. Those who prefer to follow the reading of the folio will naturally alter in the modern text *goes* to *go*, retaining the idea though not the grammatical form. Those who prefer the subject in the singular will adhere to the reading found in the quarto.

[1] Act iii., scene 3.

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLIEST EDITIONS OF SHAKESPEARE

THE assertion was made at the very outset that there never has been and that there never will be an edition of Shakespeare the text of which will command universal assent. This does not imply the existence of difference in matters of vital importance. It means variation, to be sure, on a somewhat extensive scale; but it is variation confined mainly to petty details. Both the fact and the reason for the fact have been made evident in the foregoing pages. But though the text of Shakespeare can never be expected to reach absolute uniformity, its history shows that it has tended steadily to approach it. Already differences which once prevailed have largely disappeared with the increase in knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of the Elizabethan period, with the clearing up of obscure allusions, once indeed familiar but now long forgotten, and with the explanation of passages at first sight apparently inexplicable, but which in answer to repeated inquiries as to their meaning yield at last what the dramatist himself terms pregnant replies. Towards uniformity, therefore, we have a right to believe that the text will continue to move until variation has been reduced to its lowest possible limit.

It is manifest that in the obscurity which at first pre-

vailed elements of controversy existed in abundance which would be sure in time to give birth to controversy itself. That in turn would be fomented by the general ignorance which was then found even among the highly educated of matters which are now perfectly familiar to the merest tyro in Shakespearean study. But while these agencies in creating strife existed from the beginning, they remained in a latent state until the steadily increasing interest in the works of the dramatist stirred them at last into activity. It is not until we reach the age of Pope and Theobald that we find ourselves in the presence of that outbreak of contention which has been going on uninterruptedly from their day to our own. All in consequence that is necessary to do at this point is to recite briefly the facts connected with the editions which up to that period successively appeared, and to recount the efforts that were put forth, so far as any were put forth, to effect the restoration of the text to its presumed original integrity.

So far as the seventeenth century is concerned, it may be said that hardly anything was done. During it, three editions followed that of 1623. In the one which came out nine years later occurred the first essay in the direction of attempting anything in the shape of emendation — leaving out of consideration occasional changes in the quartos which may perhaps have been intended as corrections. The alterations found in it, though not numerous comparatively speaking, were too numerous, and their character was too marked, to permit them as a whole to be regarded as the result of accident, whatever might be true of individual instances. About the value

of the changes then made, involving as they do, the comparative value of the two earliest editions, there arose at one time a sort of petty controversy amid the wide-waging war which has been going on for nearly two centuries in reference to the text of Shakespeare. It only needs to be said here that there is now a substantial agreement that if some of the alterations of the folio of 1632 are for the better, the majority of them are for the worse. They may, in a few instances, have been based upon the authority of readings which the reviser had heard from the mouth of actors. In general, they are pretty certainly conjectural emendations of his own. The independent authority of the edition is therefore slight.

The edition of 1632 satisfied all the demand which existed for these dramatic works during the stormy period that followed. The typographical excellence of the volume had indeed displeased some of the religious fanatics of the time. Milton's tribute to Shakespeare had been prefixed to it; but the attitude of Prynne in his 'Histriomastix,' published the year after, represents more accurately the view taken by the extremists of the Puritan party. This most violent of controversialists complained that more than forty thousand play-books had been printed and sold within the two years previous, they being more vendible, he tells us, than the choicest sermons. The abuses of the time were still further emphasized by him in a marginal comment to the effect that Shakespeare's dramas had been printed on the best crown paper, far better than most Bibles.[1] But the opening of the theaters after the return of the Stuarts

[1] Prynne's 'Histriomastix,' Epistle Dedicatory, and address 'To the Christian Reader.'

and the consequent reviving interest in stage representation led to a renewed demand for the writings of the one man who, even when least in favor with professional critics, was instinctively felt by the mass of readers to be the greatest of English dramatists. So followed the edition of 1663. It was printed from the preceding folio, occasionally correcting some of its errors, more often contributing new errors of its own.

The reprint of it from the same plates which came out the next year was remarkable for containing seven additional plays, in some copies occupying the beginning of the book, in others the end. Four of the seven had been brought out in quarto during Shakespeare's lifetime, with his name on the title-page as their author. These were 'Sir John Oldcastle,' with the date of 1600; the 'London Prodigal,' with that of 1605; 'A Yorkshire Tragedy,' with that of 1608; and 'Pericles,' with that of 1609. The three others had on the title-pages the initials of W. S. as the author. The letters naturally gave to the reader the impression that these pieces were the work of Shakespeare; but they did not commit the publisher to a direct falsehood, especially as there was then flourishing another dramatist whose Christian and family names began with the same letters. These three were 'Locrine,' printed in 1595; the 'Chronicle History of Thomas, Lord Cromwell,' printed in 1602, but not carrying the initials of W. S. till the edition of 1613; and 'The Puritan, or the Widow of Watling-street,' printed in 1607. The entire seven continued to hold their place in all subsequent editions of Shakespeare until that of Pope.

After the volume of 1663–1664 followed, in 1685, the fourth and last of the folios. This was reprinted from the preceding folio and differed from it in no essential particulars save for the worse. The spelling was somewhat modernized, and additional errors crept in to increase the previous stock. The deterioration which had been going steadily on since the folio of 1623 was here distinctly aggravated. In none of these editions had there been any genuine attempt to edit the text. The later folios were really nothing more than bookseller's reprints. Subject to no thorough editorial supervision they had become worse with every successive impression. To the almost invariable retention of previous errors had been added new ones which the carelessness of type-setters, the indifference of proof-readers, and the ignorant carefulness of occasional revisers had united in contributing to the existing number. The original quartos, too, had by this time largely disappeared. Few new ones came to take their place, though in the case of certain pieces frequently acted — notably 'Hamlet' — players' editions were brought out during the fifty years or so following the Restoration. These contain, now and then, emendations due to a desire to correct what seemed to the reviser obvious error; but what was done was usually done with little knowledge and less judgment. The result was that the condition of the text was as a whole distinctly worse in the latter part of the seventeenth century than it was in the earlier part.

Such a state of things could not continue forever. As the seventeenth century drew towards its close,

the reputation of Shakespeare was recognized to be steadily advancing. With it went on an increasing demand for his works. Men could not be expected to remain satisfied with editions which had been indifferently edited in the first place and had been further deformed in later impressions by errors which creep into the most carefully revised reprints and crowd into those carelessly revised. Shakespeare was beginning to assume more and more the character of a classic. The feeling grew all the while stronger that as such he should receive something of the care and attention that were due to a classic. Efforts should be made to explain what was doubtful and to elucidate what was obscure. But before that could be done, it was necessary to establish as definitely as possible precisely what it was that he wrote. Convictions of the necessity of this course forced themselves upon the minds of publishers. To make a new edition of Shakespeare sell, it was imperative to do something towards reforming the text. A man for that purpose must be found. The playwright, Nicholas Rowe, was the one selected to perform the task. His edition of Shakespeare — the first in which the dramas can strictly be said to have been edited at all — appeared in the earlier half of 1709, in six octavo volumes. It came from the publishing house of Tonson.

It was followed the next year by a volume containing Shakespeare's poems. This was based upon the edition of 1640, which had included, and by so doing had ascribed to him, a number of pieces with which he had no concern. The reprint made no attempt to sift the spurious from the genuine. Indeed the lack of authen-

ticity of any of these additions seems not to have been suspected. The volume was apparently edited by Gildon; at least he contributed to it half its contents, consisting principally of an essay upon the stage, and remarks upon Shakespeare's plays. It was designedly made similar in size to the volumes containing the dramatic works, but it did not come from the publishing house of Tonson. This continued to be the case in the three reprints of it which followed in 1714, in 1725, and in 1728. In all of these it appears either as a supplementary volume or part of a supplementary volume to the editions of Shakespeare's plays which were brought out in those years. But in them Tonson had no interest. To Rowe's second edition of 1714, which appeared in eight duodecimo volumes, this reprint of the one brought out in 1710, containing the poems, was joined as the ninth volume; but it bore the names of other publishers on its title-page. Of the volumes of 1725 and 1728 George Sewell was nominally the editor; but the work in both instances was practically nothing more than a reprint of the poems as they had previously appeared, along with the essays of Gildon, who in the mean time had died.

The account-books of Tonson indicate that Rowe was paid thirty-six pounds and ten shillings for his work on the edition. The sum seems somewhat beggarly for such a task, and the editor can hardly be blamed if he proportioned his labor to his reward. Yet pretensions to arduous exertions on his part were not lacking. Rowe professed to have done what he assuredly did not even try to do. In the dedication of his edition to the Duke of Somerset he disclaimed indeed the idea that

he had accomplished the impossible task of restoring the text to the exactness of the author's original manuscripts. As these had been lost, all he could do, he declared, was to compare the several editions and secure from them as far as possible the true reading. This had been his endeavor; and one would infer from his words that he had been successful in carrying it out. His edition was based upon the fourth folio. In that he observed that many lines had been left out, and in 'Hamlet' one whole scene. These he had supplied. While he admitted that faults might still be found he hoped that they would be those of a merely literal and typographical nature.

The student of the history of Shakespeare's text will hardly be disposed to apply so mild an epithet as 'exaggerated' to Rowe's declaration of what he had done. He possibly looked in a hasty way over certain of the earlier quartos. To 'Romeo and Juliet' he added the prologue which was lacking in the folios; though, for some unaccountable reason, in both his editions he placed it at the end instead of the beginning. He added also to 'Hamlet' the second scene of the fourth act in which Fortinbras is represented as having appeared with his army. This too had been wanting in the folios. But these insertions were clearly rather the result of accident than of careful scrutiny. The emendations he made of the text came rarely, if ever, from the consultation of any of the original authorities. They were practically all his own. He corrected certain obvious errors. He put forth some happy and some unhappy conjectures. Still, while the work done by Rowe was neither very efficient nor very effective, there is always

danger of treating him with injustice. He probably did all that he was expected or perhaps allowed to do. In contemplating his shortcomings we are apt to forget how much there was which needed to be done. Not only did he introduce some corrections which have been quietly accepted by all, he completed two things in particular which before his time had been performed but partially.

In the folios the dramatis personæ were given in only eight of the thirty-six plays. The division into acts and scenes was carried out in the most imperfect and haphazard manner. Six of the plays — the second and third parts of 'Henry VI.', 'Troilus and Cressida', 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Timon of Athens' and 'Antony and Cleopatra' — begin with the heading *Actus Primus, Scæna Prima.* After this there is no further indication of act or scene. Those which are found now rest consequently upon the authority of later editors. Furthermore ten of the plays have merely division into acts and no division into scenes. In three more — 'The Taming of the Shrew', the first part of 'Henry VI.' and 'Hamlet' — the division is only partially carried out. These are perhaps the most flagrant illustrations that can be found of the carelessness in this particular with which the work was first edited, but others could be given. These defects of the original sources Rowe remedied. It was no slight task, and it demanded in every case a careful study of the plot. Even if his conclusions were not always accepted, they furnished an invaluable starting-point for the work of further investigation.

Such was the state of things one hundred years after the death of Shakespeare. He had outlived entirely the period of comparative disparagement and neglect which seems to overtake the reputation of even the greatest authors for a while after their decease. In the estimate of men he had now forged ahead of the dramatists of his time whom previously many had been disposed to reckon as his equals. With the steadily increasing attention paid to his writings there went on in many quarters increased study of the text and tentative efforts towards its restoration. The impatience with its condition which had led to Rowe's partial and ineffective efforts to clear it from the errors with which it swarmed was every day growing more pronounced. It was the varying views about the proper method of securing this result which caused the breaking out of the controversy on that subject which raged with extremest violence during the whole of the eighteenth century. In it, especially at the outset, took part no small number of men of letters of greater or less prominence. The subject itself, though not directly belonging to literature, has become, in consequence, to some extent an integral part of English literary history, far more indeed than is generally supposed. The eighteenth century had not finished its first quarter when a new edition of Shakespeare came out under the editorial supervision of him who was reckoned then by the concurrent voice of friends and enemies as the greatest poet of the time. With its appearance begins the era of controversy.

CHAPTER V

POPE'S EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE

In May, 1720, the last instalment of Pope's translation of the 'Iliad' came from the publishing house of Lintot. The work which had absorbed the thought and toil of years was completed. From the day of the appearance of the first part in 1715 its success had been assured. Scholars might cavil then, as they have cavilled since, at the character of the rendering and at its fidelity to the original. They might point out mistakes due to the poet's ignorance of the language he was seeking to translate. There were doubtless grounds for the assertion constantly made at the time, and often repeated since, that Pope knew little Greek, and what little he knew he did not know accurately; that in consequence he missed the precise sense in some places, and that even when the precise sense was given, his rendering was not made from the original, but was patched up from versions of Homer which had already appeared in English or in French. In all charges of this sort there was unquestionably a measure of truth. What his critics forgot was that while Pope was neither a profound nor an accurate scholar, he was a man of genius. As a result he brought to the task he set out to accomplish qualifications which

learning could not impart and pedantry was unable to appreciate.

But if scholars frequently took exception to the work, the public did not. With the latter it had one merit which then as now, overbalanced any possible defects. It could be read. The unflagging interest it possessed caused it to be welcomed everywhere as being itself a distinct contribution to the literature of its own tongue, and not simply a version into English of the classic of another tongue. Translations of Homer have multiplied since its day. Many and perhaps all are more accurate; some are far more interesting to scholars, and to highly educated persons of the scholastic type. But with the general public of cultivated readers Pope's version has never lost the hold which it gained at the very outset.

In this undertaking, Pope had reversed the usual position of author and publisher. The profit arising from the production of the translation had come mainly to himself. But Lintot's name had been on the title-page. Even were we to assume that his connection with the work brought him no great direct pecuniary benefit, it conferred reputation upon his house. This fact did not escape the attention of his chief rival, Tonson. There was one author for whose works a permanent and increasing popularity was assured. The two editions of Shakespeare, edited by Rowe, had not been sufficient to meet the growing demand of the public for the writings of the great dramatist. Still less did they come up to the requirements of slowly advancing English scholarship. Here, as it seemed to Tonson, was his opportunity. Pope had just completed his translation

of the 'Iliad.' He was hailed on all sides as the British Homer. After the death of Addison, in 1719, there was no one to dispute his place at the head of English men of letters. His only possible rival was exiled to Ireland. Furthermore, Swift, though far superior as a writer of prose, was in the highest form of literature no rival at all. It struck Tonson as the most desirable of speculations that the greatest of English dramatists should be edited by the greatest of living English poets. It was an enterprise which would bring credit to his house as well as money to his purse. Accordingly, he made the necessary overtures. Pope listened to the voice of the charmer. In an evil hour for his comfort and reputation he agreed to undertake the task.

After a fashion he accomplished it. Like the translation of the 'Iliad' the work was published by subscription. In this instance, the profits did not go to the editor. According to Dr. Johnson's statement, derived without doubt directly or indirectly from the publishers, Pope received for his labor only two hundred and seventeen pounds and twelve shillings. This is borne out by the transcripts taken from Tonson's books, though it must be admitted that publishers' accounts have never quite attained at any period to the sanctity of a divine revelation. The amount indeed is so beggarly as to be suspicious. This would be true, were we to limit ourselves to the consideration of the work any editor would be expected to perform, without taking into account the almost inestimable value of the name of this particular editor. At a later period Pope resented warmly the charge frequently insinuated and sometimes openly

made that he had a share in the profits of the subscription. As this was at the rate of a guinea a volume, it was not unfrequently termed exorbitant. No evidence has been presented that he had any interest in it; in fact, it is only from his own indignant disclaimers that most men would now be aware that any such charge had ever been brought. It is indeed his irritation, more than anything else, that makes the matter doubtful. It is a hard thing to say, but even more suspicious than the comparative pettiness of the sum reported to have been paid for his services is his repeated and angry denial of having derived personally any benefit from the subscription; for denials of this sort were too frequently given by him to charges now known to be true. Pope's veracity is never so much to be suspected as when he is found resenting any attack upon his character or exhibiting peculiar sensitiveness to any imputations cast upon his honor.

Exactly when he began the work of revising the text, and how long he was engaged upon it, we have no means of ascertaining with exactness. In a note to that edition of 'The Dunciad,' which came out in 1736 — a time when Pope was still feeling acutely the reflections cast upon the way he had discharged his self-imposed duty — he asserted that he had assumed the burden of editing Shakespeare merely because no one else would.[1] It is likewise a reasonable inference from what he further said in this same place that he took up the task immediately after finishing his translation of the 'Iliad' — which he dated as 1719 — and then spent the next two

[1] Note to line 326 of Book 3; in modern editions, line 332.

years in the drudgery of collation and revision. It is probable that it was this note that led Dr. Johnson in his life of the poet to fix upon 1721 as the year of the publication of the edition of Shakespeare — a mistake, the commission of which the slightest examination of the work itself would have rendered impossible. Pope's words, without any verification, are always taken in their natural meaning at the risk of him who bases any statements upon them. Later we shall have plenty of opportunity to see how he varied his assertions to suit his purpose for the time being.

It is, however, reasonable to believe that Pope began the work upon the edition of Shakespeare soon after he had freed himself from all engagements connected with his translation of the 'Iliad.' From his correspondence it is evident that in the latter part of 1721 he had been for some time interested in the undertaking. A letter to him from Atterbury in October of that year makes it clear that the poet had already been, to use the bishop's phrase, "dabbling here and there with the text." [1] By the next month certainly news of the intended project had become noised abroad. "The celebrated Mr. Pope," said 'Mist's Journal,' "is preparing a correct edition of Shakespeare's works; that of the late Mr. Rowe being very faulty." [2] After this time references are more frequent and information more precise. It is clear from a letter of Pope to Broome, belonging to the early part of the following year, that he was then actively engaged in the preparation of the work. His comment on the first

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. ix. p. 31.

[2] November 18, 1721, p. 927, 2d column.

folio — which he mistakenly ascribed to 1621 — shows how little knowledge then existed of the value of the original authorities. "The oldest edition in folio," he wrote, "is 1621, which I have, and it is from that almost all the errors of succeeding editions take rise."[1] In July, 1724, Fenton wrote to Broome that he was about to finish the completion of the index.[2] Late in October of the same year Pope informed the same person that he had just written the preface, and that in three weeks the work would be out.[3] The anticipation, as happens generally in undertakings of this nature, was not fulfilled. Not until March, 1725, were the copies delivered to subscribers.

The edition consisted of six large quarto volumes. Everything about it was excellent but the editing. Perhaps the proof-reading should be included in the exception; for there were blunders in that which in a work so pretentious and costly were inexcusable. Still, paper and type were all that could be desired; and the external appearance of the volumes might fairly be called sumptuous. It was in the text the deficiency lay. The preparation of it was a task for which Pope was pre-eminently unfitted. For performing the most essential portion of an editor's duty he had the most insignificant equipment. Furthermore, he had few of the characteristics of the student as distinguished from the man of letters pure and simple. The scholastic instinct, sometimes present in poets of genius, was lacking in

[1] Letter of February 10, 1722, Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 48.

[2] Letter of July 19, Ibid. p. 82.

[3] Letter of October 8, Ibid. p. 88.

him entirely. He could never have applied himself, as did Ben Jonson, to the production of an English grammar. He could never have composed, as did Milton, a Latin one. He could never have interested himself, as did Gray, in writing notes upon Greek authors and compiling Greek chronological tables. So constituted, he had naturally failed to acquire the special qualifications which were requisite to carry through with success the work he had undertaken. He had little familiarity with the dramatic literature of the Elizabethan age. With the less known literature that was in vogue during that period he had scarcely any familiarity at all. So ignorant was he of its importance for the illustration of Shakespeare's text that he ridiculed the examination of it as trifling pedantry.

It was probably his success as a translator of Homer which led him to believe that he was fitted for this new enterprise. It is manifest that he had formed no conception of the essential difference there was in the nature of the two undertakings. In editing, he could not with any propriety substitute beauties of his own for beauties in the original he had failed to find or to render. To do even creditably the work he had assumed, poetic inspiration was of the least possible utility. On the other hand, besides the mastery of a certain kind of special knowledge which he lacked entirely, it demanded a dogged industry which never flinched from the dreary drudgery of collating different and differing texts, of weighing the exact value of individual words and phrases, of scrutinizing carefully the punctuation so far as it affected the meaning. In a higher sense, much

more was required for its successful prosecution. That involved the possession of intellectual acumen of a peculiarly subtle type, and in particular a keen analytic insight which could penetrate into the meaning of the author, when most obscurely indicated, and trace the connection of thought suggested but not fully expressed in the hurry of dialogue. These were not the qualifications or the characteristics which belonged to Pope. In undertaking the work he was misemploying his powers. Though not a scholar he was a man of genius; and as a man of genius he could be far better engaged in original creation than in revising the creations of others.

That a person of Pope's great abilities should have contributed nothing to the rectification and improvement of the text of Shakespeare would be ridiculous to assert and impossible to believe. At this point, however, it rests upon us to bring out not the merits, but the defects of a work which even in an age utterly uncritical in the matter of English scholarship, excited hostile comment in many quarters. It may not be deemed surprising that it should have fallen below the extremely overwrought expectations which had been raised from the fact of Pope's assuming the editorship. But it fell below even moderate expectations. The truth is that in several respects it was much more of a failure than it has been generally reported to be. Owing to the great reputation of the poet at the time, and to circumstances which have yet to be related, the text came to be treated with a tenderness to which it never had the slightest claim. A certain prepossession in its favor, or rather a dislike to dwell upon its defects,

has lasted down almost to the present time. Yet, if we contrast what Pope pretended to do with what he actually did, it is hardly possible to use too strong language about his course. After modestly remarking that in this edition he had given proof of his willingness and desire to do Shakespeare justice, he went on to make assertions which he soon had ample opportunity to repent. "I have discharged," he wrote, "the dull duty of an editor to my best judgment, with more labor than I expect thanks, with a religious abhorrence of all innovation, and without any indulgence to my private sense or conjecture." This was strong enough as a general statement; when it came to details it was made stronger. "The various readings," he went on to say, "are fairly put in the margin, so that any one may compare 'em; and those I have preferred into the text are constantly *ex fide codicum*, upon authority. . . . The more obsolete or unusual words are explained."

Never has there been exhibited a greater contrast between loftiness of pretension and meagerness of performance. In some ways Pope had the right conception of the duty to be done, and this he took care to proclaim distinctly. Furthermore, he had the means of doing it. To the final volume he appended the titles of the original authorities, which according to his own assertion he had made use of and compared. The list is headed by the folios of 1623 and 1632. It embraces quarto editions of all the plays — though not all the quartos — which had appeared before the publication of the first complete edition, with the single exception of 'Much Ado about Nothing.' His means for establishing the

text were therefore fairly ample; for his age indeed they may be termed almost remarkable. The number of these early authorities in his possession makes it accordingly difficult to understand the statement of Capell that Pope's materials were few. Much more confidence can be put in that editor's criticism that Pope's collation of his authorities was not the most careful.[1]

The wealth of material he possessed makes in truth the contrast between his words and his action peculiarly noticeable. He said that he had carefully collated the texts of the original copies. He did nothing of the kind. He only consulted them occasionally. He said the various readings were fairly put in the margin where they could be compared by every one. Not once in fifty times was anything of the kind done. He said he never indulged his private sense or conjecture. He did it constantly and without notification to the reader. He said he had exhibited a religious abhorrence of all innovations, and had not preferred any reading into the text unless supported by the early copies. On the contrary, the changes he made solely on his own authority ran up into the thousands, and it was rarely the case that any indication of the fact was given anywhere. He said that he had explained the more obsolete or unusual words. It was not often that he explained any, and when he did he sometimes explained them wrongly, and at other times explained them differently.

The treatment of the words he deemed it desirable to define is indeed a fair illustration of the haphazard way in which the work on this edition was done. The num-

[1] Capell's Shakespeare, vol. i. p. 16.

ber he took the trouble to explain was about one hundred and twenty. In considering them, one has always to bear in mind that the language of the eighteenth century is much further removed from the speech of the Elizabethan period than the language of to-day. Hence, there is no small number of words familiar to us now, which were rarely if ever used then. This fact must always modify any criticism of the selection which Pope made. Still, it is difficult to believe that several of those that he felt it incumbent to define could have been unknown to the men of his generation. Even if strange, their signification in most cases could have been easily guessed from the context. Where so vast a number of really difficult words were passed over in silence, it would seem hardly worth while to inform the reader, as did Pope, that *bolted* means 'sifted,' that *budge* means 'give way,' that *eld* means 'old age,' that *gyves* means 'shackles,' that *fitchew* means 'polecat,' that *sometime* means 'formerly,' that *rood* means 'cross,' and that the verb *witch* means 'bewitch.' These, and others like these, could not have been deemed obsolete: some of them it would hardly have been right to call unusual. Still, it must be regarded as in a measure evidence of the linguistic situation then prevailing that such words as these should have been thought by the greatest writer of the age to be in special need of explanation.

Proof of Pope's imperfect equipment for his task, much more striking than the selection of the words he made for definition, was too often the definition of the words he selected. These were not unfrequently the purest guesses. Even when they approached the

meaning, they sometimes failed to give it exactly. A few examples will set this forth clearly. The noun, *hilding*, 'a worthless good-for-nothing fellow,' was explained by the adjectives 'base,' 'degenerate.' *Caliver*, 'a small gun,' was set down as 'a large gun.' *Henchman* appears as 'usher'; *hurtling*, 'collision' or 'conflict,' as 'skirmishing'; and *brach*, as 'hound.' The two definitions given of *brooch* are suggestive of the obscurity as well as misapprehension that had then overtaken the designation of that now common ornamental fastening. In one place it was explained as 'an old word signifying a jewel,' and in the other as 'a chain of gold that women wore formerly about their necks.' The ingenuity with which, when a word had two possible meanings, Pope could light upon the wrong one can be seen in his giving to *callat*, 'a strumpet,' the sense of 'scold'; and again in defining *coystrel*, 'a knave,' as 'a young lad.' *Thews*, in Shakespeare, always refers to physical qualities; he made it refer to moral ones. For thus defining it he had the justification that it had been sometimes so used; but this is an explanation of his course which in other cases cannot always be trusted. In 'Antony and Cleopatra,' for instance, the queen is designated by Scaurus as "yon ribaudred nag of Egypt."[1] Pope not only followed Rowe in substituting *ribald* for *ribaudred*, but gave to the word he adopted the singular definition of "a luxurious squanderer."

Puzzling indeed it occasionally is to ascertain the quarter from which the definition of the word wrongly

[1] Act iii., scene 10.

explained could have come. Take the case of *foison*. This noun, signifying 'plenty,' 'plentiful crop,' is found about half a dozen times in Shakespeare. Pope learned at last its meaning; but when he first met it in the 'Tempest,'[1] he defined it as "the natural juice or moisture of the grass and other herbs"; and this sense was retained in his second edition of 1728. Still it is clear that in a number of instances his explanation of the word was inferred from the derivation or supposed derivation. In the first part of 'Henry IV.' the king's son rebukes Falstaff for interrupting a serious conversation with a frivolous but, it must be conceded, a very pertinent and pointed jest. "Peace, chewet, peace," says the prince.[2] *Chewet* has been defined as a kind of pie and as a jackdaw. Pope chose to consider it as a form of the French word *chevet*, and in consequence gave it the sense of 'bolster.' He was indeed always liable to get into trouble when he sought to trace his words to foreign sources. As his etymologies were often wrong, it is not at all remarkable that the explanations based upon them should not merely be guesses, but should be very bad guesses. The unscholarly nature of Pope's mind was almost invariably sure to display itself whenever he set out to exhibit scholarship.

This charge can easily be substantiated. The old English verb *ear*, as an example, means 'to plough.' Three times it was used by Shakespeare in his plays. Pope defined it and defined it correctly; but not content with this, he went on in every instance to impart the information — needless, had it been true, but worse

[1] Act ii., scene 1. [2] Act v., scene 1.

than needless since it was false — that it was derived from the Latin *arare*. A not dissimilar illustration is furnished by *neif*. This is a word which belongs to the Northern English dialects and signifies the closed hand. It is twice used by Shakespeare. In the place where it occurs in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,'[1] it was very properly defined by Pope as a Yorkshire word for 'fist.' But this same natural and, as it might seem inevitable, interpretation as an affected term for 'hand' he failed to adopt in the second part of 'King Henry IV.' when Pistol says to Falstaff, "Sweet knight, I kiss thy neif."[2] Instead he gave it the preposterous definition of 'woman-slave.' He had discovered in Spelman's Glossary that *nativa* had been used in Low Latin to indicate one born in the household; that this word had been taken over into Old French with the same signification of 'woman-slave,' but in the form *neif;* and from that tongue had passed with the same meaning into Old English. This sense, never heard, and doubtless never even heard of in Shakespeare's time, Pope chose to consider the appropriate one in the place here specified, because the mistress of Falstaff chanced to be present. He did not fare any better when he undertook to meddle with Greek. *Periapt*, 'an amulet,' occurs in the following line from the first part of 'Henry VI.,'

"Now help, ye charming spells and periapts."[3]

To this last word Pope gave the signification of 'charms sowed up.' He derived it properly enough from the Greek verb *periapto*, which he said meant 'to sowe.'

[1] Act iv., scene 1. [2] Act ii., scene 4. [3] Act v., scene 3.

This particular sense has escaped the observation of lexicographers.

But it was in the case of modern languages, especially of his own, that Pope's efforts to base interpretation upon etymology came to the greatest grief. In 'Much Ado about Nothing,'[1] where mention is made of the *reechy* — that is, the smoke-begrimed — painting, *reechy* was defined by him as 'valuable,' evidently under the impression that it had something to do with *rich*. In 'Lear,' in the passage which now reads

"All germens spill at once
That make ingrateful man."[2]

germens — that is 'germs,' 'seeds' — was explained as 'relations or kindred elements that compose man.' The word *germane*, with its sense of 'closely akin,' was clearly in Pope's mind. Again, in 'Twelfth Night,'[3] the clown remarks that "a sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit, how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward." *Cheveril* was defined as 'tender,' and to support this meaning it was represented as derived from *cheverillus*, 'a young cock or chick.' Theobald naturally observed that this was the first time a glove had been represented as made of the skin of a cockerel, and that the real derivation was from the French word signifying 'kid.' So again when Hamlet's father speaks of himself as cut off,

"Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,"[4]

Pope explained *unaneled* — that is, 'not having received extreme unction' — by the words 'no knell rung.' One

[1] Act iii., scene 3.
[2] Act iii., scene 2.
[3] Act iii., scene 1.
[4] Act i., scene 5.

is indeed surprised by his occasional ignorance of what from his professed religion he would be supposed fully to know. As an additional instance, in King Henry VIII.[1] he changed "sacring bell" into "scaring bell."

When indeed we have thrown aside the unnecessary, the inadequate, and the actually erroneous definitions which Pope gave, we have but a sorry number of absolutely correct ones to put to his credit. It was no infrequent practice with him, when he failed to understand a word to replace it by another which seemed to him more satisfactory. For instance, in the line from 'Hamlet' just cited *unanointed* was substituted by him for the *disappointed* of the original. Not the slightest hint was furnished that the word he printed was not Shakespeare's but his own. This is only one of numerous illustrations of the like unwarranted liberties which he took with the text. So Lear, in apostrophizing the elements, says to them, in the original edition, "You owe me no subscription."[2] For this last word Pope gave in his text *submission*. His procedure indeed was sometimes so arbitrary that it is not always easy to make out the reason which led him to adopt the readings he introduced. In several instances he retained the obsolete *teen*, 'sorrow,' 'grief,' and further defined it correctly. Yet in 'King Richard III.' he substituted for it *anguish*, though the ryme required the use of the original word.[3] As in a large proportion of instances

[1] Act iii., scene 2.

[2] Act iii., scene 2.

[3] "Eighty odd years of sorrow have I seen,
And each hour's joy wracked with a week of teen."
Act iv., scene 1.

there is no intimation that any change whatever has been made, we can never feel certain, so long as we confine ourselves to his text, whether we are reading the words of the dramatist or those put for them by the editor.

An explanation, if not an excuse, can be offered for Pope's course. In doing as he did, he was simply conforming to the reprehensible practice which prevailed during his time and long afterward in the editing or reprinting of English classics. There was little thought of preserving the original text in its integrity. It was deemed the duty of the reviser to improve it so as to adapt it to the taste of the more refined age to which he had the happiness to belong. Unwarranted changes were accordingly made at the will or the whim of the editor. Indeed the works of authors so late as Addison or Swift had frequently to endure the impertinence of having their assumed grammatical errors corrected by the veriest hacks in the pay of the booksellers. The license in which Pope indulged was therefore characteristic of his age; only his name gave a weight and authority to the changes he made which would never have been accorded to those of an inferior man. The extravagances he committed have indeed met with no general recognition; for they have been largely obscured to sight and lost to memory in the greater brilliance of Warburton's extraordinary performances in the same line.

So far as the text pure and simple was concerned, everywhere throughout this edition were exhibited marks of grossest carelessness. The various readings

were given on the pettiest scale, nor is there ever the slightest indication of the source from which they are derived. The words found in the margin may have been taken from a quarto, from the first or the second folio, or from Rowe's text, or they may have been of Pope's own invention, for anything the reader can tell. The original punctuation was sometimes changed so as to destroy the sense; at other times it was retained when, as the result of so doing, the sense was destroyed. As Pope substituted words of his own for those he did not understand, so, ignorant of the grammar of Shakespeare's time, he altered it to suit the grammar of his own time. He seems, at least at first, to have been unaware that double comparison characterized the language of the Elizabethan period, as indeed it had characterized the language of the two hundred years previous. Consequently when the Duke of Milan tells his daughter that she knows nothing of whence she came, or that he himself is "more better than Prospero, master of a full poor cell," Pope changed "more better" into "more or better." So when Shakespeare used the plural form *year*, *years* was frequently substituted. When double negation appeared, as, for instance, in a phrase containing both *nor* and *neither*, the *nor* became *and*. In all these cases no intimation was given that any change whatever had been made.

In this edition, furthermore, Pope took the most unwarrantable liberty which has probably ever been taken with the text of a great author. Anything that did not suit his taste he insinuated and indeed almost directly asserted was not the composition of Shake-

speare, but interpolations foisted into the piece by the players. An impression to this effect was conveyed in particular in regard to the passages which contained quibbles, or dealt with words used seriously in the same sentence but with different meanings. In these, it is needless to observe, not merely the comedies, but also the tragedies abound. In certain cases Pope gave vigorous expression to a desire to throw out whole scenes, but contented himself with setting against them typographical marks of reprobation. This could be endured; but there were many passages which he refused to print in their proper place. He wrenched them from the context and put them in different type at the bottom of the page. That much of the matter thus rejected is distinctly inferior cannot be questioned. None the less was his action unwarranted. It was a course of conduct that no editor, acting merely on his private judgment, had a right to follow. The matter dropped may have been poor. It may have been Shakespeare at his worst, and possibly not Shakespeare at all. It may be that it could have been entirely omitted, as Pope asserted, without causing any break in the orderly development of the plot. But assuming all this to be true, no authority belonged to any editor to mutilate the text in this way, and substitute for what had been transmitted his private notion of what it ought to be. There can be no limit to arbitrary changes and omissions, if each man's taste is to be the standard of what is to be received as genuine.[1]

[1] There were only ten plays in which Pope did not discard some of the lines of the original. In 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' 'Merry Wives of

The action of Pope in this particular could not, therefore, be regarded under any circumstances as praiseworthy. But there were circumstances in which it was inexcusable. In some instances the matter degraded was essential to the full comprehension of the matter which followed. But there were proceedings even worse. Lines were occasionally dropped without any attention being called to the fact. In one or two instances certainly we know this to have happened as the result of pure carelessness. In others it is apparently due to his not having the slightest comprehension of the meaning. Macbeth, for illustration, in giving his instructions to the men employed to murder Banquo, takes care to tell them that his complicity in their action must never be allowed to come to light.

> "Always thought
> That I require a clearness," [1]

is the caution he interposes. These words were omitted by Pope without the slightest notification of the fact. The only apparent reason for his so doing is that he had no conception whatever of their meaning.

Other lines were thrown out of their place seemingly because they did not recommend themselves to Pope's judgment, and his judgment in a number of instances is quite inexplicable to the modern reader. Of this the play just mentioned will furnish striking exemplifications. In the high-wrought passage in which Macbeth

Windsor,' 'Measure for Measure,' 'As You Like It,' 'All 's Well that Ends Well,' 'Twelfth Night,' the third part of 'Henry VI.,' 'Henry VIII.,' and 'Antony and Cleopatra,' nothing was relegated to the bottom of the page.

[1] Act iii., scene 1.

declares that he has murdered sleep, it is not altogether easy to look with equanimity upon Pope's degradation to the bottom of the page of one of the lines of the impassioned apostrophe to that state of rest which describes it as

"Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleave of care."[1]

But what are we to think of an editor who coolly relegates to the obscurity of the margin a line which Homer might justly have felicitated himself upon writing, but which Homer's translator found himself incapable of appreciating? We all know how Macbeth, when he realizes the impossibility of even the great ocean washing the bloodstains from his hand, expresses the utter futility of such a moral purification by saying,

"This my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnardine,
Making the green one red."[2]

The second line of the passage Pope discarded from the text and placed in the margin. Furthermore, not content with leaving out this picture of the ceaseless play and infinite variety of the ever-restless waves, he destroyed as far as he could, the beauty of it, by printing without any authority the four words constituting the line in the following form:

"Thy multitudinous sea incarnardine."

Fortunately for the text the relegation of distasteful matter to the bottom of the page was not followed, with a single exception, by later editors, even when they

[1] Act ii., scene 2. [2] Ibid.

most firmly believed that a part of the dialogue was jejune and trivial. Not even Warburton, who was capable of committing any outrage upon the received reading, resorted to this course. The one exception was Sir Thomas Hanmer, whose edition appeared in 1744. He accepted and improved upon Pope's procedure. So far from finding fault with his predecessor's rejection of various passages, he regretted that more had not undergone the same sentence. Therefore upon his own judgment he discarded an additional number which he looked upon as objectionable. The most considerable, he tells us, was "that wretched piece of ribaldry put into the mouth of the French princess and an old gentlewoman, improper enough as it is all in French and not intelligible to an English audience, and yet that is perhaps the best thing that can be said of it."[1] He went on then to repeat Pope's accusation of the actors as the ones responsible for these wretched interpolations. While admitting that some of the poor witticisms and conceits must have fallen from the pen of Shakespeare himself, he insisted that a great deal "of that low stuff which disgraces the works of this great author was foisted in by the players after his death, to please the vulgar audiences by which they subsisted."

[1] Henry V., act iii., scene 4.

CHAPTER VI

POPE'S TREATMENT OF THE TEXT

All that has been said of Pope's edition in the preceding chapter is the truth. It is even less than the truth. Yet taken by itself it would certainly give a wrong impression. In one way a great deal of injustice has been done to Pope from his own age to the present. At the very beginning the comments made upon his edition led to the unavoidable inference that the duty which he had assumed had been performed not only unsatisfactorily, but also perfunctorily. At a later period accusations to this effect were sometimes expressed even more strongly. The belief has largely extended to our own day.[1] To use a modern phrase, he has been charged with scamping his work. The gross unfairness of attacks of this sort Pope felt at the time and resented with a good deal of indignation. So far from neglecting the task he had taken in hand, he devoted to it a great deal of attention and labor — so much indeed that the amount reported to have been paid him for his services must always seem absurdly small.

[1] *E. g.*: "Fenton received £30, 14 *s.* for his share in Pope's meagre edition of Shakespeare. Very little labour was bestowed upon the work, and much of that little was done by Fenton and Gay." Note by Elwin in 'Pope's Works,' vol. viii. p. 82.

The wide prevalence of the belief in the remissness displayed by him in the discharge of his duty had, however, a measure of justification. The labor he bestowed upon his work was not the kind of labor he pretended to have bestowed. We constantly meet in life with a certain class of men who may be said to be victims of their own ideals. The motives by which they declare themselves actuated are so lofty, the ends they have in view are so elevated that ordinarily it is quite impossible for weak human nature to lift their conduct up to the level of their professions. So it was in this instance with Pope. He knew and proclaimed some of the methods of scholars, even if he did not follow them as he declared. He made the nature of a certain portion of editorial duty so clear that no one could mistake it. He set the standard for it so high that it was in the power of those he had instructed in the character and extent of its requirements to detect readily how far he had fallen below it. The consequence was that his failure to do what he asserted he had done led to the utterly unwarranted conclusion that he had done nothing at all.

Yet whatever may be our opinion as to the methods he employed and the results he reached, it would be uncandid to deprive him of the credit of that industry to which he is entitled. Proofs of the time and toil he spent upon the text can be found on nearly every page. In certain passages he re-arranged the words, and thereby established the measure so successfully that his regulation of the lines has been generally adopted. He marked with much more precision the places where the

scenes were laid — a work which on account of the frequency with which changes of these take place needed to be done, and to do properly required close attention. Furthermore the contributions he made to the correction of the then current text were sometimes of distinct value. His edition was set up from Rowe's second edition. But there will be found instances where Pope did not follow the reading of his predecessor, but retrieved the right one from either a quarto or the first folio. Take, for example, the speech of the consul Cominius, when he is represented as celebrating to the people the deeds of Coriolanus.[1] In the text, as he found it, the hero is said to have "waited like a sea." For this Pope substituted from the first folio "waxed like a sea." Again in the same address where the received reading had been for a century that "his every motion was trimmed with dying cries," Pope substituted from the same source *timed* for *trimmed*. A little later in the speech "shunless defamy" was made to give place to "shunless destiny." These changes need only to be mentioned to have their value recognized at once. Pope's action in this matter was neither systematic nor thorough. Still, no one can go over it without becoming aware that in his way he at intervals labored hard upon the text. All that he did could never have been reckoned great work; but some of it, so far as it went, was good work.

Furthermore, to some of the plays he added passages which did not appear in the edition of his predecessor. Their absence from that was owing to the fact that they

[1] Coriolanus, act ii., scene 2.

were not contained in the folios. Pope was accordingly the first to lay the quartos under contribution for the establishment of the modern text. To 'Hamlet' he added a few lines from this source; to 'Lear' a great many, — roughly speaking, about one hundred and fifty, including a whole scene. These are specimens of the work he did which suffice to free him from the charge of having treated with almost total neglect the authorities which he pretended to have collated. There is something also to be said in favor of his conjectural emendations. Some of them certainly deserve all the harsh criticism which they have received; but there are others which are peculiarly happy. Several of them have commended themselves to all, or at least to the vast majority of later editors, and may be said to have now become a constituent part of the received text.

It is the misfortune of Pope, however, that he can rarely be praised as an editor in any particular without reservation. It was not often his wont to do his work thoroughly. He restored, as we have seen, to the text of 'Lear' about one hundred and fifty lines from the quarto; he left about a hundred more to be added from the same source by Theobald. The thing should have been done completely or not done at all. To refrain from doing either the one or the other merely illustrated in consequence the capricious way in which he dealt with his authorities. No settled principles in fact determined his action in any given case. He had used the quartos to improve the text; he likewise used them to mar it. Living at the time he did, he was pardonable for not possessing either the knowledge or the critical

sagacity which would have enabled him to decide upon the comparative value of early editions where more than one existed of the same play. This was a knowledge, to which the imparting of anything like certainty required almost a further century of investigation. What was inexcusable was the deference he paid to some of the early quartos whose manifest corruption ought not to have been hid from the most superficial student. These particular quartos are now universally recognized as among the pirated, and imperfect because pirated, plays which then came not infrequently from the press. Pope pompously proclaimed them as "first editions," and gave the impression that the form in which they appeared was due to the author himself. This is indicated in his attitude towards the corrupt quarto of 'Henry V.,' which was originally published in 1600. In his controversy with Theobald he pretended to rate the text of this wretched edition as being in some ways of superior value to that of the same play as found in the folio of 1623, because it had come out in Shakespeare's lifetime.

But perhaps his worst achievement in this line was in the case of the imperfect pirated quarto of 'Romeo and Juliet,' which appeared in 1597. Poor as it was, he paid to it the most marked deference. In his preface he said in praise of it that there was no hint in it of "a great number of the mean conceits and ribaldries" which were now to be found in the play.[1] Upon the strength of its readings he not only failed to retain in the text numerous lines, he did not even trouble himself to put them at the bottom of the page. There are instances in

[1] Pope's Shakespear, vol. i., Preface, p. xvi.

which it is hard to say whether the recklessness or the audacity displayed in these rejections is the greater. In one place he omitted nineteen serious lines in the speech of Friar Laurence to Romeo.[1] He mentioned the fact, to be sure, — it was something which he often thought it not worth while to do, — but it was in the following way that he mentioned it: "Here follows in the common books," he wrote, "a great deal of nonsense, not one word of which is to be found in the first edition." So in the succeeding scenes nearly a dozen lines are omitted; none of them, however, are so indicated. This is far from being the only play in which he threw out passages because he deemed them unworthy of Shakespeare, accompanying their rejection with a running comment of disapprobation. In 'Othello,' for illustration, certain of the abrupt exclamations wrung by Iago from the tortured spirit of the Moor, are relegated to the margin with the following note, "No hint of this trash in the first edition."[2]

A more serious charge can be brought against Pope's manipulation of the text. Among the early plays which are still extant is a comedy entitled 'The Taming of a Shrew.' Pope recognized the closeness of the resemblance between this and the play of Shakespeare's which bears almost the same title. Plot and scenery, he said, were not essentially different. In certain respects he even thought the presumably older comedy to be superior. Still he was not inclined to attribute its composition to the dramatist. "I should not think it written by

[1] Act iii., scene 4.

[2] Pope's Shakespear, vol. vi. p. 551.

Shakespear," are his words.[1] Yet with this belief about it he added in two places lines from it to the Induction of Shakespeare's play.[2] They are in no way necessary to the sense, and it is not easy to discover any motive for their insertion. He had also before him the old play in two parts entitled 'The Troublesome Reign of King John.' Though on its title-page it purported to have been written by Shakespeare and Rowley, there was no question in his mind as to its spuriousness. He accordingly did not append it to his list of quartos consulted and compared. "The present play," he said of Shakespeare's on the same subject, "is entirely different and infinitely superior to it."[3] Yet from this admittedly spurious piece he received into the text of the genuine in one place twelve lines, in another three lines. Both interpolations were unnecessary, and the latter compelled the omission of a part of one line of the original.

These are sins both of omission and of commission: but whatever their gravity, they make it clear that Pope was far from slighting the early editions. Still, there was never any systematic or thorough collation of them. In its stead was merely occasional consultation. Even this seems to have been largely a matter of caprice. His method of proceeding in general may be stated as having been about as follows. If a puzzling sentence chanced to arrest his attention, his first thought apparently was to amend it by some conjecture of his own. If no way of clearing up the difficulty presented itself

[1] Pope's Shakespear, in Table of Editions at end.

[2] Ibid. vol. iii. pp. 279 and 283.

[3] Ibid. vol. iii. p. [115.]

to his mind, he turned to the quartos or folios for help. If a satisfactory solution of the difficulty could be derived from these sources, he availed himself of it, though assuredly not in all cases. How indifferently, how negligently this work of consultation was done, there are plenty of examples to show. Specimens have been given of Pope's corrections of Rowe's text in the speech of Cominius in the tragedy of 'Coriolanus.' In this same speech occurs also in the first folio — which he must have had before his eyes — the following passage:

> "As weeds before
> A vessel under sail, so men obeyed
> And fell below his stem."

In all the later folios *weeds* had been replaced by *waves*. Pope not only retained this reading, but improved upon it after his fashion. He changed *stem* to *stern;* and it was not until Malone's edition of 1790, that the text of the folio was restored in its entirety. Steevens indeed clung to *waves* to the last and defended it.

In his emendations, furthermore, there was occasionally displayed something more than misunderstanding of meaning. He evinced at times an intellectual obtuseness which, considering his intellectual power, affords matter for legitimate surprise. The negative failures were, however, far more pronounced than the positive. He let go by without remark, and apparently without remarking, sentences out of which it seems impossible to extract any satisfactory meaning. Obscurity due to badness of text escapes at intervals the attention of even the most keenly observant. This was sure to be frequently the case with an editor of the character of

Pope. In the hurry of perusal he did not observe difficulties which lay in his way. Sometimes too these could have been removed with the least possible trouble. A consultation of the original authorities which he had at his command would have set right passages which as found in his edition are obscure, when they are not incomprehensible. Illustrations of these characteristics of his work need not detain us here. A sufficient number of examples will be furnished when we come to the detailed account of the controversy which went on later between him and his rival editor.

Indolence, however, has its compensations as well as its disadvantages. It is one of the results of Pope's hap-hazard way of dealing with the text that he left passages unchanged which at first sight seemed to demand alteration of some sort to give them any sense whatever. It is possible that extraordinary perspicacity on his part led him in some instances to take this course; it is altogether more probable, it is in truth practically certain, that his action was due generally, if not invariably, to heedlessness, or indisposition to grapple with the difficulties that presented themselves. Such places usually underwent more or less of transformation at the hands of later editors. But fuller and closer investigation has established a satisfactory sense for the original reading, sometimes the very sense which demands its retention. The altered passage has accordingly been restored to the state in which it first appeared, and in which it was left by both Rowe and Pope. The action of the latter in letting sentences remain as he found them brought him in many instances into trouble;

but in some it has turned out distinctly to his advantage. In the feverish activity of modern life we are too little disposed to recognize what an important part for good is often played by indolence. The indisposition manifested at times by Pope to disturb the existing text has in several cases redounded not only to its benefit but to the benefit of his own reputation.

It is a natural inquiry after statements of this sort, what is it that Pope did to entitle him to the praise of industry which was accorded to him at the beginning of this chapter? In the things in which the excellence of an editor is supposed mainly to consist — the collation of texts, the correction of errors, and the clearing up of obscurities — he failed relatively, or in the eyes of some almost absolutely. In spite of all this there is ample reason for ascribing to him industry. It was not to these aims of the modern conscientious editor that Pope's attention was mainly directed. It was the meter for which he specially cared, not the matter. Therefore it was to the rectification of the measure that he largely devoted himself. It was a task congenial to his taste and his temperament, and in performing it his activity was ceaseless. In the text of Shakespeare, as it has come down to us, there are defective lines, there are redundant lines, there are lines that do not read smoothly. It was an object which Pope kept steadily in view to remove these irregularities, to reduce everything to the measured monotony of eighteenth-century versification. To bring about this result, words were inserted in the verse, words were thrown out, or the order of words was changed. To these three classes

belonged the vast majority of Pope's emendations. Nor were they few in number. On the contrary, they mounted into the thousands. Sometimes indeed the whole method of expression underwent transformation. As a general rule these omissions, additions, and alterations were in one sense unimportant. Very rarely do they affect the meaning. Still, this is not always the case; it could not well be. The rage of emendation is something against which the sanest of editors has always to be on his guard. Once under its influence he never knows to what extremes he will insensibly be driven.

In dealing with the text of Shakespeare, Pope followed the unchecked license of editors of English classics before and after his time. He did with it what seemed right in his own eyes. In the matter of versification in particular, he gave unrestrained loose to his passion for mechanical regularity. The changes he made were in consequence exceedingly numerous. Furthermore, they were nearly all made silently. In scarcely a single instance where the line has undergone alteration for the sake of the meter is there the slightest hint furnished of the deviation which has taken place from the original. What has been observed of the words constituting the vocabulary is equally true of the verse as a whole. In any given case we are never sure whether we have the text in the exact form in which Shakespeare presumably wrote it, or as Pope altered it. With him indeed began the practice so prevalent in the eighteenth century of reducing the lines to the uniformity which men had learned to love. If this could be done by him we

need not feel surprised at the conduct of his admirers and imitators. They improved upon the example he had furnished. For though he had reaped a great part of this particular harvest, there was still a good deal left for later meter-mongers to glean.

The process was objectionable, the results were untrustworthy. It was objectionable, not merely because it represented Shakespeare berouged, periwigged, and attired generally according to the fashionable literary mode of the eighteenth century, but because it often happened that what was gained in artificial harmony was more than lost in expressiveness and force. It was untrustworthy because the changes made were sometimes due to the ignorance of the grammar and pronunciation of the period as well as of its methods of versification. No small share of the work of later students of Shakespeare has been to relieve the text from the alterations made in it by earlier editors, and to restore it as far as possible to the state in which it had originally appeared. Consequently, while it can be justly said that Pope devoted much time and labor to the work he had assumed, it is equally just to say that it was largely time wasted and labor misemployed. It is a question indeed whether the text of Shakespeare suffered more from his indolence or from his industry.

At the outset it certainly suffered more from his industry. Little conception have we now of the all-powerful influence wielded by Pope in his own time, especially during the latter years of his life. It occasionally overrode, as we shall have occasion to see, all considerations of probability, justice, and truth. In the

particular subject under discussion his influence was materially aided by the then general ignorance of what we now call English scholarship, or rather by the absolute indifference to it which prevailed. So uncritical was the age, so potent was Pope's opinion, especially in matters of versification, that the host of changes silently made by him in the text with the implied or avowed intent of improving and perfecting it, were blindly adopted by his immediate successors without any thought apparently of questioning their necessity or desirability. That Hanmer and Warburton should have accepted the remodelling he made of the lines is not surprising. But it shows how unbounded was the deference paid to his metrical skill that these alterations should have been so largely left undisturbed by Theobald.

It gives even a more impressive idea of the authority attaching to Pope's opinion that in regard to matters in which he is recognized to have been no authority at all, his procedure was frequently followed by Theobald without protest or question. Utterly indefensible additions made by him received in numerous instances the sanction of his immediate successor, and hence of those still later. In particular, the passages already mentioned, which he foisted into the text from plays with which he confessed Shakespeare had had nothing to do, were adopted from him by his rival editor. There was a possible excuse for this course in the case of the lines borrowed from 'The Taming of a Shrew.' That comedy Theobald had never had an opportunity to examine. He might in consequence feel that there was justification for including the lines which had been inserted from it into

the text. Indeed, Capell declared much later that he had been unable to secure the play, though he had taken great pains to trace it; and that Pope was the only editor by whom up to that time it had been seen.[1] But even here Theobald's action was inexcusable. It was bad enough to print the lines supplied; it was far worse not to follow his predecessor in indicating the foreign source from which they came.

Furthermore, in the case of 'King John' Theobald's course had not the sanction of his own conscience. In that play he adopted Pope's additions with the perfect knowledge that there was no warrant at all in the original for their insertion. To the longer of the two spurious passages — the twelve lines of dialogue between Austria and Falconbridge — he indeed interposed an objection. He protested in a note that they were not essential to the clearing up of the circumstances of the action, as Pope had pretended. He proved conclusively that the ground for the quarrel between the Bastard and the Austrian duke had been sufficiently denoted already; that consequently the lines borrowed from the old play had been adopted arbitrarily and unjustifiably. After doing all this he then proceeded to insert them in his own edition. "As the verses are not bad I have not cashiered them," he wrote.[2] No clearer view could be given of the early eighteenth-century idea of editing the text of an English author than are these words coming from one of its most conscientious scholars. It was this submission of his own judgment to that of the man who

[1] Capell's Shakespeare, vol. i., Introduction, p. 2.
[2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iii. p. 200.

had despitefully used him that gave Capell his pretext for denouncing Theobald as being no better collator than Pope himself.

Two or three other characteristics of Pope's edition need to be mentioned before passing to the controversy that was occasioned by it. He threw out, on the ground of both matter and manner, "those wretched plays," as he styled them, which had been added to the third folio and had been subsequently included not only in the fourth, but in the two editions of Rowe. Though they were but seven in number, he with his usual heedlessness spoke of them in the preface to his first edition as eight.[1] For taking this course he had the authority of the first two folios; but there is no question that his main reason for discarding them was his perception of their inferiority as literature. Since his action these have been no longer included in the accepted canon of Shakespeare's writings with the one exception of 'Pericles.'

This view of the additions to the folio of 1663 was not a new one to take. It was a conclusion which anybody would be certain to reach the moment he approached the consideration of them in a critical spirit. It had in fact been both entertained and expressed many years before. Gildon informs us that the great actor, Betterton, had told him that these pieces were spurious. He himself admitted 'Pericles,' but the other six he condemned with unwarrantable extravagance. He declared that they had not anything in them, not so much even as a line, to lead any one to think them of Shakespeare's composition.[2]

[1] Pope's Shakespear, vol. i. p. xx.

[2] Poems of Shakespeare (ed. of 1714), p. 373.

But though Pope had been anticipated in his view, he was the first to carry it into practice. It needed in truth a man of his literary position to defy at that time the precedent which had been established for including them; and perhaps to no one else would the assent to the exclusion from the canon have been then so unresistingly accorded. His judgment in rejecting them has never been seriously called in question, with the one exception already noted, by any Englishman, in spite of all the absurd vagaries which are wont to masquerade under the guise of Shakespeare study. No one indeed in these modern times is likely to stand up unqualifiedly for the genuineness of any of the numerous plays once attributed at times to the dramatist, but now utterly discarded, unless it may be an occasional German. That very possibility is of itself proof how little a foreigner is ever qualified to appreciate the subtle characteristics which disclose to the native the genuineness or spuriousness of particular works. External evidence he may judge accurately; internal evidence is to him largely a sealed book.

It gives in truth a vivid view of the sort of Shakespeare that Germany might have conferred upon us, if we mark the pieces of varying degrees of wretchedness which have been ascribed to him by some of her foremost scholars and critics. Their conclusions furnish an interesting commentary upon the claim, sometimes ignorantly put forth in her behalf, that she was the first to reveal the poet to the men of his own race. Tieck, for instance, was one of the most enthusiastic of the early foreign devotees of the dramatist. His natural

superiority in literary appreciation and insight to the great mass of such students, no one would be likely to question. Nor for that matter did he himself entertain any doubt as to his excelling in this respect Shakespeare's countrymen. He observed that the weak side of the later English commentators was poetic criticism. He censured them for their contemptuous rejection of the proposition that Shakespeare was concerned in any one of the numerous pieces for which groundless rumor or bookselling craft had made him responsible. Then he proceeded to exhibit his own critical sagacity by treating several of these plays as certain or possible productions of the dramatist. There was no doubt in his mind that it was from Shakespeare's pen alone that 'Arden of Feversham' could have come.[1] Others may have belonged to the period of his youth. Why, he said, should not 'Fair Em' have been a specimen of the feeble strivings of his poetic pinions when without knowledge and without experience he first sought to write for the stage?[2] Why should not Shakespeare, he again asked, have conformed to the practice then prevalent and joined a weaker poet in the composition of 'The Birth of Merlin'?[3] These views are sometimes put forth hesitatingly, to be sure; that they could be put forth at all furnishes convincing evidence of how utterly great abilities in possession of the foreigner fail to acquire that instinctive sense of the possible in authorship which seems to fall almost as an inheritance to

[1] Tieck's Kritische Schriften, Erster Band, s. 261 (Leipzig, 1848).
[2] Ibid. s. 279.
[3] Ibid. s. 304.

the native of comparatively moderate powers who has once imbued himself with the feeling of a writer's manner and familiarized himself with his characteristic methods of expression.

The case is even worse with Schlegel, the creator in part of that version of Shakespeare which is regarded as one of the great masterpieces, if not the great masterpiece of German translation. This critic, who had unhesitatingly proclaimed the superiority of the dramatic art of the great Elizabethan to that of the so-called classical school, accepted as probably, or rather as certainly genuine the seven pieces which from the time of Pope had been, with one exception, thrown out of every English edition as unmistakably spurious. Nor was he content with this negative approval. Three of the seven — 'Thomas Lord Cromwell,' 'Sir John Oldcastle,' and 'The Yorkshire Tragedy' — he declared to be not only written by Shakespeare but to deserve being classed among his best and maturest works.[1] The two former were in his opinion models of the biographical drama. In the last of the three mentioned the tragic effect was declared to be overpowering; of special significance indeed was the poetical way in which the subject had been handled. Schlegel's criticism of the art displayed by Shakespeare exhibited the keenest insight. When it came to a question in which literary sensitiveness was a determining factor in reaching a correct decision we can see for ourselves the result. One, indeed, often comes to have the feeling that if Germany

[1] A. W. Schlegel's Dramatische Vorlesungen, zweiter Theil, zweite Abtheilung, s. 238 (Heidelberg, 1814).

had had its way completely, Shakespeare would have received credit for the authorship of most of the pieces which he did not write, and would have been deprived of the credit of most of those which he did.

It is needless to insist, however, upon the superiority of Pope's taste and discrimination to any qualities of that sort possessed by a foreigner. There was, indeed, one peculiarity of his edition which was mainly due to his appreciation of literature as literature. To a certain extent he made it a collection of elegant extracts taken from Shakespeare. He distinguished what he called the most shining passages by commas at the beginning of the lines, and where the beauty lay not in particulars but in the whole he prefixed an asterisk to the scene. It was something which by nature he was qualified and by inclination was disposed to do. Yet, even here we are occasionally treated to surprises. The celebrated passage, for example, in 'Richard III.' in which Clarence relates to Brackenbury his terrible dream finds with him neither general nor specific approval. Still, this portion of the work he had assumed was, as a whole, well done; it will always remain a question whether it was worth doing. Such designation of beauties lies justly open to the censure which Johnson passed upon it in the proposals he put forth for his own edition. Johnson asserted that for that part of his task which consisted in the observation of faults and excellences Pope was eminently and indisputably fitted, and for this only. "But I have never observed," he added somewhat dryly, "that mankind was much delighted with and improved by these asterisks, commas, or double

commas; of which the only effect is that they preclude the pleasure of judging for ourselves, teach the young and ignorant to decide without principles; defeat curiosity and discernment by leaving them less to discover; and at last show the opinion of the critic without the reason on which it was founded, and without affording any light by which it may be examined." It is to be added that the only other editor who followed this practice was Warburton.

To the completed work Pope furthermore contributed a preface. During most of the eighteenth century — down to and including the *variorum* of 1821 — this was reprinted in nearly all the editions which followed. It was also regarded, almost universally, as the proper thing to admire. The opinions of a man of genius are assuredly always worth considering. In this instance too they have a historic value, because here Pope represented fairly the general critical attitude of his time in regard to the merits and defects of Shakespeare. It had besides some special excellences of its own. It took sensible ground upon the learning of Shakespeare, or his alleged want of learning. It denied the truth of the opinion even then prevalent that Ben Jonson was his enemy. There are, furthermore, several very fine and genuine tributes paid to Shakespeare's greatness. But, as a whole, the preface cannot be conceded much critical value from the modern point of view. In some places, besides, it was disfigured by errors of fact. Worse than all, it was made at times the vehicle to convey the editor's opinion, not of the author he was seeking to illustrate, but of the men for whom he had come to entertain dislike.

1718

Pope's relations with the actors of his day were never cordial after the failure, in 1817, of 'Three Hours after Marriage.' Towards Colley Cibber, on the whole the most noted representative of the theatrical world, he exhibited during the last twenty-five years of his life peculiar venom. His feelings colored many of the assertions he made in his preface, and affected to some extent his method of editing the text. Of the players of Shakespeare's time he invariably spoke with contempt — apparently forgetting that Shakespeare himself was one of them. Upon them, he chose to charge — as has already been intimated — everything he found in the dramas of the nature of mean conceits or petty ribaldry. It was they who were responsible for this stuff. It was they who had sought to tickle the ears of the groundlings by foisting these ridiculous passages into the plays. Shakespeare was exempted from censure in order by so doing to belabor his theatrical associates. All this may be so; but Pope was in no position to prove that it was so.

1718

The defects of Pope's edition were naturally far from being as evident to his own generation, (and even generations much later,) as they are now. At the time, men grumbled much more at the extravagant price at which it was issued than they did at the character of the editing. The one was a matter which the very dullest could comprehend; of the other it was in the power of extremely few to form anything like an intelligent opinion. The dissatisfaction was not lessened by the publisher's advertisement, when the work was on the point of appearing, that the price would be advanced for those

who were not subscribers. It was a further subject of complaint that the binding of the volumes would increase considerably the cost of what was already too costly.[1] As Pope had publicly proclaimed that the subscription was not for his benefit, the wrath of men was directed against Tonson. Still, it is clear that vague suspicions were entertained, both then and afterward, of the poet's complicity in the whole scheme.

The expression of feeling just indicated, the publisher doubtless bore with equanimity; but he as well as his editor was pretty surely disturbed by criticism of another kind which came from another quarter. During the years that had elapsed since the publication of Rowe's first edition, there had been growing up a small body of men who had given and were giving a good deal of time and thought to the study of Shakespeare. They had learned by diligent examination something of the difficulties presented by the received text, they had gained some idea of the measures that needed to be taken to effect its restoration. To such persons, the failure of Pope's methods was apparent. It was easy to set in sharpest contrast the difference that existed between what he had promised and what he had performed. From out this number, came forward one to subject to strictest examination the work which had been so pompously heralded. He was of all Englishmen then living the man best equipped for the task. His name was Lewis Theobald.

[1] See, for example, articles in 'Mist's Journal' for March 20 and March 27, 1725.

CHAPTER VII

THE EARLY CAREER OF THEOBALD

THE career of Pope is so well known that any portrayal of it in a work of this character would be justly deemed an act of supererogation, if not of impertinence. Accordingly nothing in regard to it shall be given here save what is necessary to explain his connection with the Shakespearean quarrel in which he became engaged. No such course, however, can be followed in the case of the man with whom he came into collision. Of him but little is known; much of the little said to be known is wrong. It becomes, therefore, a matter of some consequence to give a fairly full account of the scholar who is one of the two leading figures in the first and fiercest of the controversies which have arisen in regard to the text of Shakespeare.

This man was Lewis Theobald, or Tibbald, as the name was regularly spelled by Pope. It was perhaps so written by him to accord with the pronunciation. He and Pope were, in the most exact sense of the word, contemporaries. Both were born in 1688, both died in 1744. To a certain extent they engaged in the same pursuits. Both wrote poetry, both put forth translations of ancient writers, both edited Shakespeare. Here the resemblance ceases. The one, a man of genius, became the acknowl-

edged head of the poets of his time. The other was a middling writer, whose productions, though sometimes far from being actually bad, had little reputation while he was alive, and from the time of his death have been subjected to constant depreciation, especially from those who have never read a line of them. On the other hand, he possessed a critical acumen in the rectification of corrupted texts vouchsafed to but few. He as much surpassed Pope as a commentator as the latter surpassed him as a poet. He was the first great editor of Shakespeare, and still remains one of the few entitled to be so designated.

Theobald was born in Sittingbourne, Kent, a few weeks before Pope. His father was an attorney who died while the son was still young. Theobald tells us himself that it was to a member of the nobility, a portion of whose estates was in the neighborhood of his birthplace, that he owed everything. This patron it was who had screened him, to use substantially his own words, from the distresses of orphanage and a shattered fortune; who, not content with protecting him from the cradle, had given him an education, which he could fairly boast to have been liberal; for during seven years he had been the companion and fellow-student of his son. The patron was Lewis Watson, the first earl of Rockingham. The son, who died before his father, was viscount Sondes. He was very nearly of the same age as Theobald. Had he lived, it is no unreasonable supposition that his old schoolmate would have been spared many of the anxieties and troubles which later were to beset his life.

There can be no question that Theobald's education

was liberal. The instruction he received must have been exceptionally good, and it is clear that he well improved his opportunities. There was a common consent among his contemporaries best qualified to judge that he was exceedingly well stored with classical learning. Even in his later years, when he was subjected to constant attack, those who depreciated his ability were very cautious as to the reflections they ventured to cast upon his scholarship. That was an exploit reserved for later times and for men who had not one tithe of his knowledge. But however ample may have been the learning which he came to possess, it was not acquired at any of the great public schools of England or at either of the universities. According to a brief account — doubtless submitted to him, if not furnished by him — which was contained in a collection of biographies published during his lifetime, his studies were carried on chiefly under the Reverend Mr. Ellis, of Isleworth in Middlesex.[1] It was doubtless at this place and under that instructor that he and Viscount Sondes were fellow-students.

Theobald was destined for the profession of the law and began its practice. He perhaps never abandoned it entirely, for there are several contemporary references to him as engaged in the pursuit. Indeed in a letter of his own to Warburton, written in March, 1729, he told his correspondent that he had been fatigued with more law business than the present crisis of his affairs made desirable.[2] It does not follow with certainty from these words that he was then actually practising his profession;

[1] Jacob's 'Poetical Register,' vol. i. p. 257 (ed. of 1723).

[2] Letter of March 18, 1729, in Nichols, vol. ii. p. 204.

but it is the most natural interpretation of them. Still, in any case law was with him an avocation rather than a vocation. The attention he paid to it became, and probably early became, entirely subordinate to other pursuits. His heart was in literature, ancient and modern, especially in the literature of the drama. To this he made contributions of his own, such as they were, during his whole life. While his abilities were not sufficient to lift him out of the common ruck of theatrical writers, the familiarity he acquired with the stage, and what is called its business, was of essential service to him in the great achievement of his life, the interpretation and emendation of the text of Shakespeare.

After a fashion he was precocious. It is not at all unlikely that his appetite for knowledge and his devotion to study was the main motive that led his patron to provide him with the means of acquiring an education. In one way Theobald's zeal was misdirected. It is evident that from his early years he was fired with poetic ambition, and his desire for distinction in this field never forsook him entirely during his whole life. In 1707, when he was less than twenty years old, he made his first appearance in print. It was with the production of one of those spurious Pindaric odes which Cowley had brought into vogue, and which had been afflicting English literature since his death. The subject of the poem was the union of Scotland and England which had been effected the preceding year. This ode, which was published as written by Lewis Theobald, Gent., was dedicated to his kinsman John Glanville, of Broadhurston, Wiltshire. It was preceded by some

eulogistic verses addressed to the author by "an ingenious and obliging friend," who signed himself J. D. To those who knew Theobald personally a certain interest for that very reason would then attach to the production. To them the merit attributed to the piece, whatever it was, would be further enhanced by the youth of the writer. The only attraction it can have for us now is the exceeding absurdity of much that was written. It is with the following lines the poem opens:

> "Haste, Polyhymnia, haste; thy shell prepare:
> I have a message thou must bear,
> But to the car a salamander tie:
> Thou canst not on a sunbeam play,
> And scud it through the realms of day,
> Where great Hyperion sits enthroned on high."

This extract — pretty plainly inspired by the opening lines of Cowley's 'Muse' — will be sufficient to satisfy the cravings of the most curious in regard to the author's early poetic achievement. It is just to add, however, that it is about the worst part of the worst piece he ever wrote.

In what way Theobald came to have a connection with the theater there seem to be no means of ascertaining. Yet in 1708, the year following the production of his ode, he accomplished a feat which, though not unrivalled in the annals of precocity, is for all that one of the rarest in the history of the stage. At this particular time there was in London but one play-house with but one company of players. To it and to them aspirants for dramatic fame were necessarily compelled to offer their productions. Accordingly the rejections could not

have failed to be numerous, and the favor of the manager and actors by no means easy to secure. Yet on the 31st of May, 1708, was performed at Drury Lane a play of Theobald's entitled 'The Persian Princess, or the Royal Villain.' On that day he was but a few weeks over twenty years of age. The piece was preceded by a prologue which pleaded the youth of the writer as a reason for indulgence. We may form what estimate we choose of the play itself; but to have a production of this sort accepted and performed at the sole theater then existing in London and with its two principal parts taken by the leading tragic actors of the time, Wilks and Booth, must be regarded as a wonderful achievement for an author who was nothing but a mere boy.

It is hardly necessary to observe that 'The Persian Princess' is not a great play. Nor does it seem to have met with any particular success. Though called a tragedy, it ends happily for the hero and the heroine. Tragical it is, however, to an extent sufficient to satisfy the taste most sanguinarily disposed. It conforms fully to the Elizabethan tradition as to the shedding of blood. Of the eight male characters four are despatched on the stage; and while it is behind the scenes that a fifth swallows the poison which destroys his life, care was taken to exhibit to the audience a full view of his dying agonies. Though the piece was brought out in 1708, it was not till 1715 that it was published. If the form in which it appeared at the latter date was the form in which it was acted, it must be deemed, in spite of certain absurdities and extravagances, a by no means poor production for

so young a writer. Theobald on his part took pains to give the impression that no changes had been made in the interval which had elapsed between performance and publication. In the introduction which he furnished to the play when printed, he asserted that he had been so much occupied in the translation of works of importance that he had had no time to throw away in correcting and improving this early production. Furthermore he tells us that it was written and acted before he was fully nineteen. This may have been true of the composition; it was assuredly untrue of the performance. There was indeed in his language an affected tone of depreciation of the work as a trifling piece which had been suffered to lie in obscurity for half a dozen years until the repeated importunities of friends had wrung from him a reluctant consent to the publication. No great weight need be attached to assertions of this sort. The request of friends was part of the stock in trade which every writer of the eighteenth century felt at liberty to draw upon as a pretext for venturing into print.

At a somewhat early period in his life — the date cannot be fixed with our present knowledge — Theobald took up his permanent residence in London. To a certain extent he led there for a long time the life of a hack-writer, though most of the work he set out to perform was a good deal above the capacity of the literary proletariat which then and later swarmed in that city. During the latter half of this interval, and the period immediately following, we find him busied with the composition of all sorts of productions, ranging

from the highest kind of poetry to the humblest prose. He wrote biographies, he wrote original poems, he wrote short pieces on all sorts of topics which had for the moment engaged the attention of the public. He followed the literary fashion which had been set a few years before by Steele and Addison and had now become general. He produced a series of periodical papers under the title of 'The Censor.' These were begun in April, 1715, and appeared three times a week for thirty numbers. They were then discontinued with the intention of being taken up again in four months; but it was not until January, 1717, a year and a half later, that the work was resumed. With the publication of the ninety-sixth number on the first of June of that year it concluded.[1]

In these various attempts Theobald attained a moderate degree of success. His productions were almost invariably respectable, even when prepared solely to meet an immediate demand, though not a single one of them has any claim to distinction. It was doubtless the wish to relieve the wants of the moment that led to the composition of most of the slighter pieces. Yet, though regularly under the necessity of earning his subsistence, Theobald seems, during at least the greater part of his life, to have been free from the pressure of actual need.

[1] It is a common statement that these essays were originally published in 'Mist's Journal.' Indeed Nichols, in his 'Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century' (vol. ii. p. 715), says that they not only appeared in it, but appeared in 1726. It is sufficient to say that 'Mist's Journal' was a weekly, and that 'The Censor' was published three times a week; and further that thirty numbers of 'The Censor' had been published before the end of June 1715, while the first number of 'Mist's Journal,' came out in December, 1716.

That his means were always limited, we can feel fairly certain; that at times he found himself in pecuniary straits, there is every reason to believe; but what little evidence exists gives no countenance to the prevalent belief that he was ever subjected to the pressure of genuine poverty. Naturally he resorted to all sorts of expedients to help out his income. In particular he followed the general custom of his time in dedicating his productions to persons of wealth and station. Among them he clearly had some warm friends and patrons, and from them doubtless he received aid that contributed materially to his support.

Much unnecessary pity has indeed been wasted upon Theobald for the extent to which he has been supposed to be in straitened circumstances. That he should have been in them at all was lamentable because it had the effect of hindering him from carrying on the work for which he was peculiarly fitted. A poor man in one sense of the phrase he manifestly was, during his whole life. That condition was practically forced upon him by the character of the studies in which he was concerned. The pursuit of learning and the pursuit of wealth are, strictly speaking, incompatible; and Theobald was too much devoted to the one to expect many favors from the other. Yet he was enabled to support a wife and certainly one child. Furthermore, the place of his residence and the length of time he spent in it are utterly inconsistent with the idea of indigence. At the beginning of the Shakespearean controversy his home was in Wyan's Court, Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury. There he spent the rest of his life. To

his house intending subscribers were asked to come to examine works for which proposals had been issued. There also they were to receive the volumes for which they had subscribed. A continuous residence for at least a score of years in a quarter of London not given over to the poverty-stricken must have demanded a fairly regular income, no matter how small. Such facts as these and others yet to be recited do not indeed prove him to have been well-to-do, but they utterly dispose of the frequent assumption that his condition was one of penury.

Two subjects there were to which at this earlier period of his life he especially devoted himself; and to one of them he remained faithful almost to the end of his days. For a time, however, his main interest seemed to lie in making versions of the Greek and Roman classics. He did something in this line; he purposed doing a great deal more. The account-book of the publisher Lintot, under date of May, 1713, records the payment to Theobald of several pounds for a translation of the *Phaedo* of Plato which was published that year.[1] It further shows that he had entered into a contract to render the plays of Æschylus in blank verse. About a year later he had agreed with the same publisher to produce a translation of the 'Odyssey' in the same measure, with explanatory notes; and also four specified tragedies of Sophocles. For every four hundred and fifty verses, with the accompanying annotation, he was to receive the sum of fifty shillings. Further he was to render in ryme the satires

[1] Nichols' 'Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century,' vol. viii. p. 301.

and epistles of Horace. In the case of this author for every one hundred and twenty verses he translated he was to be paid twenty-one shillings and sixpence. A line appears drawn through this contract as if for some reason the project had been abandoned. Its existence, however, makes clear that no poor opinion was entertained either of the abilities or the scholarship of Theobald; for it is to be kept in mind that he was not then twenty-six years old.

The translation of a single play of Sophocles is all of the magnificent programme then projected which was carried into execution. The most singular thing indeed about these undertakings is that Theobald did not produce the work he had engaged to do, but on the other hand did produce works of the same character which, so far as any evidence now exists, he was under no obligation to do. He published versions of three plays of Sophocles, the *Electra* and *Ajax* in 1714 and the *Œdipus Tyrannus* in 1715. The last is the only one of the four which, according to his agreement with Lintot, he was to render into English. Furthermore in 1715 he brought out versions of the *Plutus* and the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. He made no translation of the satires and epistles of Horace; but if contemporary evidence can be trusted, he produced, as if in place of it, a version of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. A statement to that effect is given in the account of his life contained in Jacob's 'Poetical Register,' above cited.[1] It is further confirmed by a remark of Dennis which had appeared, as early as 1717, in his review of Pope's translation of Homer. The

[1] Vol. ii. p. 211.

critic had been irritated by the attacks upon himself in 'The Censor' and by the outspoken praise accorded to the version of the 'Iliad' then in process of publication. He was not slow to retort in the genial tone prevalent in the criticism of that day. He spoke of Theobald as "a notorious idiot who had lately burlesqued the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid by a vile translation." [1]

One undertaking of Theobald's there was which has been made the pretext for casting utterly unfounded reflections upon his course in relation to Pope. His interest in Greek literature naturally involved interest in its foremost poet. During the last years of the reign of Queen Anne, Homer had become the great subject of literary conversation and controversy in consequence of Pope's projected version of the 'Iliad.' Theobald was naturally affected by a feeling so widely prevalent. In 1714 he published a critical discussion of the epic in question. The first part of Pope's translation of the 'Iliad' had come from the publishing-house of Lintot in 1715. Not long after the same house issued a translation by Theobald of the first book of the 'Odyssey' with notes. It seems to have been put forth as a sort of experiment, and was accompanied with proposals for bringing out by subscription a complete version of this epic.[2]

[1] Remarks upon Pope's Translation of Homer (1717), p. 9.

[2] The pamphlet devoted to a critical discussion of the 'Iliad' and the translation of the first book of the 'Odyssey' I have never seen. Both seem to be exceedingly rare. Neither of them is to be found in the library of the British Museum or in the Bodleian. It will be noticed that Pope gives 1717 as the date of the publication of the latter. Nichols, in his list of the works printed by Bowyer, refers the appearance of the work to November, 1716. ('Literary Anecdotes,' etc. vol. i. p. 80.) It may be added that the translation of the *Metamorphoses* seems to have disap-

The scheme never went further. The necessary number of subscribers was clearly not secured. Knowledge of this projected translation has indeed so entirely disappeared that most of those who are fairly familiar with the period are ignorant of the fact that it was ever even contemplated. A reference to it is found in 'The Dunciad' of 1729, in a note on Theobald, which has disappeared from modern editions. "He had once in mind," said Pope, "to translate the 'Odyssey,' the first book whereof was printed in 1717 by Lintot, and probably may yet be seen at his shop."[1]

We have been told by an authority in general fairly trustworthy that the pamphlet by Theobald upon the 'Iliad' and the proposed translation of the 'Odyssey' are "circumstances which sufficiently account for his situation in the 'Dunciad.'"[2] They had nothing to do with it whatever. In this instance the assertion is due purely to ignorance. But it has been Theobald's peculiar fortune that whenever knowledge of any event in his career is lacking, an attempt has always been made to supply its place by derogatory suggestion. Prejudice has never permitted a resort to the natural and indeed necessary interpretation. Disraeli in his 'Quarrels of Authors' professed to be in doubt whether Theobald's translations were made from the original Greek. He came to the conclusion that they must be, from the cancelled entries which have already been mentioned.

peared as effectually as the other two works just mentioned. It is not found in either of the two great English libraries, at least under the name of Theobald.

[1] Dunciad, Book 1, line 106 (quarto of 1729)

[2] Nichols' 'Literary Anecdotes,' vol. i. p. 80.

His ignorance of the man's classical scholarship, which far exceeded his own, might be pardoned, though there was no necessity of exhibiting it; but the surmise which followed was as gratuitous as it was ridiculous. "Perhaps," he added, "Lintot submitted to pay Theobald for not doing the 'Odyssey' when Pope undertook it."[1]

It is enough to say of this suggestion that the translator of the 'Iliad' had not at the time the slightest idea of becoming a translator of the other epic; nor did he engage in the latter task until Theobald's project had been so long given up that it was practically forgotten. At the same time it is more than likely that the inferior author's willingness, if not desire, to produce a translation of the 'Odyssey' was stimulated by, if it did not owe its origin to, the interest which had been aroused by Pope's version of the 'Iliad.' To attempt something of the same nature as that undertaken by the first poet of the age was a natural ambition on the part of every aspirant for reputation in letters. So far as knowledge of the ancient languages was concerned Theobald was inconceivably better equipped for the task than his great contemporary. The infinitely more important element of poetic genius was lacking entirely. This readers of every stamp were certain to recognize. It cannot, consequently, excite any surprise that the public which had welcomed Pope's projected translation with avidity should have been disposed to look with absolute indifference upon the new enterprise recommended to its consideration.

A few translations contained in a miscellany called 'The Grove' complete all of Theobald's attempts of

this character which ever saw the light. This work was brought out in 1721. The versions he contributed to it from the pseudo-Musæus, from Sophocles, Æschylus, and Theocritus ended his published efforts as a translator. It was not in this way that he could hope to gain distinction. Yet the desire lasted a good while after every promise of success failed. There was, in particular, one undertaking of this nature in which he was interested for a period of years, though perhaps intermittently. This was a translation of the seven extant plays of Æschylus. It was a task for which he would seem to us to have been pre-eminently unfitted. Yet if we can infer what the whole would have been from the version of two passages contributed by him to the periodical essays he wrote,[1] it would have been, though not a great, a reputable piece of work. Furthermore, we have the assurance of a thoroughly competent critic that the version which he actually made of the three tragedies of Sophocles was "in free and spirited blank verse" and that his version of the two comedies of Aristophanes was "in vigorous and racy colloquial prose."[2]

To the projected translation of Æschylus he certainly devoted more or less of the time and attention of years. There seems little reason to doubt that so far as preparation for the press was concerned, it was fully completed. That he had it in mind as early as 1713 has been shown by the entry in Lintot's account-book. The brief contemporary notice of his life, which was

[1] Censor, No 60, March 9, 1717.

[2] Churton Collins, in 'Dict. of Nat. Biography,' vol. lvi. p. 118.

probably submitted to his revision, states definitely that the work was then finished. He issued proposals for its publication, which was fixed for April, 1724. In 1726, at the conclusion of his 'Shakespeare Restored' he begged the pardon of his subscribers for the delay. The best apology he could make was that in the interval he had been at the expense of copper-plates to be prefixed to each tragedy, and had also been engaged in a complete history of the ancient stage as a prefatory dissertation.

The failure to bring out the work was pretty certainly due to his inability to secure an adequate subscription to meet the expense of publication. If difficult before the appearance of 'The Dunciad,' after that event it practically became impossible. Dennis in his criticism upon that satire incidentally gives us to understand that there had not been sufficient encouragement to carry through the project. His essay was dedicated to Theobald himself. Among other things it contained remarks upon this very point. "If your translation of Æschylus," he said, addressing him, "is equal to the specimen which I have seen of it, of which I make no doubt, it may make him," — that is, Pope, — "blush for his translation of Homer." Dennis then referred to the failure of both Theobald and Ambrose Philips to receive the support of the public in their projected undertakings. "If neither of you," he continued, "have had a subscription adequate to your merits, it is because in this wise and judicious age, the age of operas, of 'Beggars' Operas,' of 'Dunciads,' and 'Hurlothrumbos,' 't is not in the nature of things at present, and consequently an im-

possibility that any author can have a generous subscription to a work that highly deserves it."

Excuses of this sort did not avail Theobald against the attacks of his implacable enemy. After the appearance in 1726 of his review of Pope's edition of Shakespeare constant sneers were indulged in at the poetical ability displayed in this version of a classic of which the censurer had never read a word. "His own cold Æschylus" is the phrase applied in the original 'Dunciad' to the expected translation.[1] To a line announcing the approach of "another Æschylus" he appended in the quarto of 1729 a note describing the terror wrought by the acting of one of the pieces of the Greek tragedian. He then proceeded to make some comments upon the proposed version which were not calculated to promote its success. "Tibbald," wrote Pope, "is translating this author: he printed a specimen of him many years ago, of which I only remember that the first note contains some comparison between Prometheus and Christ crucified."[2] This was designed to excite against the work religious prejudice. There is no need of calling attention now, nor was there then, to the gross unfairness of such criticism; but carrying with it the authority of the first writer of the age, it was none the less effective.

Pope further taunted Theobald with his failure to bring out works for which he had secured subscriptions.

[1] Dunciad, Book i., line 200 (editions of 1728). The line is not in modern editions.

[2] Dunciad, Book iii., line 311 (editions of 1729); modern editions, line 313. The part of the note here quoted was dropped in the 'Dunciad' of 1743, and is not found in modern editions.

In this same edition of 'The Dunciad' insinuations to that effect were made. "He had been," wrote Pope under the signature of Scriblerus, "(to use an expression of our Poet) *about Æschylus* for ten years, and had received subscriptions for the same, but then went *about* other books."[1] When it seemed certain that Theobald was to publish a full commentary upon Shakespeare according to the scheme then proposed, these attacks increased in virulence. They may have hindered him from carrying his desire into effect, but they did not destroy the desire itself. To a late period he clung to the hope of bringing out his version of Æschylus. In a note in his edition of Shakespeare[2] he discussed the liberties taken with chronology by the English dramatist and adduced numerous examples of the same practice derived from other poets ancient and modern. "The anachronisms of Æschylus," he observed, "I shall reserve to my edition of that poet."

[1] Dunciad, Book i., line 210 (editions of 1729). This note is not in modern editions.

[2] Vol. vii. p. 44.

CHAPTER VIII

THEOBALD'S DRAMATIC VENTURES

THE version of Æschylus, whether fully prepared for the press or not, never passed beyond the stage of manuscript. Nor indeed was it in translation from the ancient drama that Theobald's greatest interest really lay; it was in the modern drama. He appears to have been intimate with John Rich, who on the death of his father Christopher in November, 1714, came into the proprietorship of the play-house just erected in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is not impossible — though no evidence whatever exists on the point — that it was his friendship with the son that led to the father's acceptance of his first play for performance at Drury Lane. At all events there is no question as to his close connection for a number of years with the new owner of the new theater. By Mestayer, a writer with whom he shortly after came into conflict, he was styled its deputy manager.[1] Dennis, a little later still, referred to him as having from "an under-spur-leather of the law" become an "under-strapper of the play-house."[2] Certain it is that he did not disdain to assist Rich in the preparation of the

[1] Preface to Mestayer's 'Perfidious Brother,' 1716.

[2] Remarks on Pope's Homer, 1717, p. 9.

operas, masques, and pantomimes for which this theater in the course of time became famous.

In their fondness for productions of this nature the public of the first half of the eighteenth century apparently went mad. Pantomime in particular had been developed by Rich on a great scale. He himself, under the name of Lun, took the principal part in the representation. The ability displayed by this actor-manager, especially in the character of Harlequin, seems, if we can trust the concurrent voice of his contemporaries, to have been almost marvellous. Entertainments of the sort met indeed with such success that the rival theatre of Drury Lane was forced to adopt them also. One result of this was that for no inconsiderable while the legitimate drama held the second place. In truth Theobald, in dedicating to Rich the volume containing his first emendations of the text of the greatest of English playwrights, remarked that it seemed a strange thing that in attempting to restore Shakespeare he should address the work to the one man who had done a very great deal towards banishing him from the stage and confining acquaintance with him to the closet.

In the preparation of these operas and pantomimes Theobald was largely concerned. There are about half a score of them to which his name is appended as the author of the libretto, or for which he is held responsible. These performances had in all cases a good deal of a run, and in some cases a very great run, much to the real or simulated indignation of the lovers of the regular drama. One of them, entitled 'The Rape of Proserpine,' was brought out in 1725. It was received with such favor

that many men saw in its success the decay of the stage, and censured bitterly every one concerned in its production and representation. Of course Theobald suffered in the general denunciation. Still, the taste for these entertainments lasted not only during the whole of his life but long after. Naturally pieces of this character had no permanent value. It was not upon their literary merits that they depended for success, but upon their spectacular and vocalic. There is, therefore, nothing surprising in the fact that the matter Theobald furnished belongs to the lowest class of middling poetry. Now and then a good or even fine line shows itself, and perhaps receives undue praise from the contrast with the mass of commonplace in the midst of which it is embedded. One of the last of the operas with the authorship of which he is justly or unjustly credited, was entitled 'Orpheus and Eurydice' and was brought out in 1739. It is a curious coincidence that the second line of a couplet contained in it —

> "By rigid death's remorseless doom,
> She 's snatched away in beauty's bloom —"

corresponds almost word for word with a line beginning one of Lord Byron's 'Hebrew Melodies.' While it is not impossible, it is exceedingly improbable that Byron had ever read this opera or had heard the verses just quoted from it.

It was not to these dramatic trifles, however, that Theobald confined his attention. He was fired with an ambition for distinction in fields for any serious success in which he was totally unfitted. He did not escape

the temptation which beset so many mediocre poets during the hundred years following the Restoration, of remodelling and adapting a play of Shakespeare. The one he selected was 'Richard II.' Unlike certain others, this alteration failed to meet with the permanent success which it did not deserve. Still, it had a run of seven nights when it was first performed at the theater in Lincoln's Inn Fields in December, 1719.[1] After that it was never heard of again. About fourteen years later he tried his fortune anew in an adaptation of Webster's 'Duchess of Malfi.' This was brought out in April, 1733, under the title of 'The Fatal Secret.' It was acted but four times.[2] As Theobald tells us himself in the preface to the play, when published in 1735, it "was praised and forsaken." There was another tragedy of which he was the author that did not meet with even as good a fortune as this. It bore the title of 'The Death of Hannibal.' Though written and prepared for the stage, as early certainly as the beginning of the third decade of the century, it was never either acted or printed.[3] So far as can be judged it was wholly his own composition. If so, it and his earliest piece are the only plays of importance in which he was concerned as sole author. His other productions were built upon the foundations laid by some one else. Two of them deserve attention, one for reasons personal to himself, the other for its connection with Shakespeare.

The first here referred to exposed him to the suspicion

[1] Genest's 'English Stage,' vol. iii. p. 32.

[2] Ibid. vol. iii. p. 392.

[3] Giles Jacob's 'Poetical Register,' vol. i. p. 259.

and in fact to the direct charge of dishonesty. A tragedy, purporting to be his, was brought out at the theater in Lincoln's Inn Fields in February, 1716. It bore the title of 'The Perfidious Brother.' On the stage it proved then a failure; it is just as much a failure now in the closet. The story upon which it is based is a peculiarly unwholesome one, and there is nothing in the treatment to make amends for its disagreeableness. The plot bears a somewhat close resemblance to that of 'The Unnatural Brother' of Filmer, which had met with deserved failure in 1696.[1] If modelled upon that, as seems likely, it was no improvement upon it. But whoever wrote it, had Othello in his eye. The perfidious brother, Roderick, is a feeble copy of Iago, possessing his wickedness but lacking his intellect. Indeed it is hard to consider the villain a villain, his actions are so persistently those of a fool. Nor does the corresponding Sebastian, the other principal character, exhibit sufficient sense to make him an object of interest. The failure of the tragedy in representation gives the impression of the existence of a good deal of discernment on the part of the audience. It is assuredly the worst piece of dramatic work in which Theobald was ever concerned, and this is saying a good deal. In the preface to the printed edition he expressed regret that it had not answered so well to Mr. Rich as he had hoped. He professed himself unable to account for its being so generally approved in the town and so little regarded on the stage. The modern reader finds no difficulty whatever in understanding the latter statement, but much difficulty in believing the former.

[1] Genest's 'English Stage,' vol. ii. p. 114.

In this same preface Theobald defended himself from the charge contained in a story industriously spread in one part of the town — chiefly, he said, among the mechanics — that the drama was not really his own; that, as a matter of fact, he had had no hand in it beyond giving it a general supervision, and here and there the correction of an odd word. This he denied. He acknowledged that the story upon which the plot of the play was founded had been brought to him by a watchmaker, named Mestayer, and had been wrought up by that person into something designed to be called tragedy. He had agreed to make it fit for the stage. With that object in view, he had toiled at it for almost four months without interruption. As a result of his labors he had so thoroughly recast the piece that he considered that he had created it anew. Mestayer was far from holding this opinion of the alteration. The following year he carried out his threat of printing the piece, and if we may trust his assertion, printed it exactly as it had come from his hands in the first place. It was accompanied with a far from flattering dedication to Theobald himself, and the comments contained in the preface upon his proceedings were not calculated to give an exalted conception of his character.

With our present knowledge of the circumstances it cannot be established with certainty that Mestayer's printed piece was the actual original, though the probabilities favor this view. If so, there is no question that it furnished most of the material upon which Theobald's version was built, and that the names of creator and reviser should have appeared in connection with it both

when performed and when published. At the same time the original, if the original, was an impossible play for either acting or reading. Theobald's version, however poor as poetry, was at least verse, and not prose. No one would fancy that Mestayer's version was anything but prose,— and the wretchedest of prose at that, — were it not that capital letters appear at the beginning of every line. The exact facts in the case are never likely to be ascertained; in truth, they are hardly worth the trouble of ascertaining. It may be regarded, however, as a point in Theobald's favor that contemporary hostility seems very rarely, if ever, to have fastened any reproach upon him for his conduct in this matter. Pope, his most inveterate enemy, never brought against him — at least in direct terms — the charge of appropriating another man's work; and any possible accusation or plausible insinuation to his critic's discredit was not likely to escape the poet's active malevolence. The only reference to this transaction which is found in his acknowledged writings is contained in a note to a line of the first book of 'The Dunciad' in its original form, which reads as follows:

"Now flames old Memnon, now Rodrigo burns."

Rodrigo is here the Roderick of 'The Perfidious Brother,' "a play written," remarked Pope, "between T. and a watchmaker." [1]

The other piece with which Theobald's name is connected occupies a more important place in the history of

[1] Dunciad, Book 1, l. 198, ed. of 1728; l. 208, quarto of 1729. In modern editions The Cid and Perolla, Book 1, l. 250, take the place of Memnon and Rodrigo. The note has accordingly disappeared.

Shakespearean controversy. In 1727 he announced that he had come into the possession of a play of the great dramatist which had never been printed. It was entitled 'Double Falsehood, or the Distressed Lovers.' This, he revised and adapted for the stage. At this time there seems to have existed an estrangement between Theobald and Rich. The piece, in consequence, was not brought out at the theater in Lincoln's Inn Fields, but at Drury Lane. It was first acted on the 13th of December of the year just named. The curiosity of the town had been excited and stimulated by methods which, however common now, were then unusual. Notices of the coming production appeared in newspapers some days before its actual performance. Attention was directed to the question of its alleged authorship, and the public was called upon to give its decision. The matter naturally aroused interest. The play met with what was deemed at the time a distinct success. It had a run of ten nights [1] and before the season closed it was performed at least twice more. For benefits it was selected not unfrequently during the eighteenth century, down even to near its close. As a reading play, it also met with a good deal of favor. A royal license dated December 5, 1727, was issued giving to Theobald the sole right of printing and publishing the piece for

[1] "By the unanimous applause with which this play was received by considerable audiences for *ten* nights, the true friends of the drama had the satisfaction of seeing that author (i. e., Shakespeare) restored to his rightful possession of the stage," etc., etc. — From a letter signed Dramaticus to the 'Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer,' No. 142, Feb. 10, 1728. According to Genest, the play ran from Dec. 13 to Dec. 22, and Dec. 26 was the tenth night.

the term of fourteen years. These are the simple facts connected with the production of the play. The copyright Theobald sold in July, 1728, for one hundred guineas.[1]

As regards its authenticity, public opinion was divided from the outset. Surprising as it may seem to most men now, Theobald's reputation as a Shakespearean scholar and critic, at the time of the production of the play, stood higher than that of any one. Naturally his opinion as to its genuineness carried great weight. Still, on the part of many, and probably of the large majority, there was little belief that this particular drama was written by Shakespeare. On the part of some, there was a strong suspicion and indeed a not uncommon assertion that it was the actual production of the pretended reviser. So wide-spread became this view, so frequent was the insinuation to this effect that, in the preface to the play, when printed, Theobald felt himself under the necessity of repelling the charge. In the dedication of it to Bubb Dodington, he referred to the doubt expressed by many that a manuscript of one of Shakespeare's works could have remained so long unknown and unnoticed, and to the further intimation that he himself had a much greater concern in it than that of mere editor. Yet the play, he added, had been received with universal applause. These unbelievers, therefore, while admitting that they were pleased, and yet implying that they were imposed upon, were paying him a greater compliment than they designed or he deserved.

[1] See E. Hood in 'Gentleman's Magazine,' March, 1824, vol. xciv. p. 223.

Notwithstanding his denial, the belief that the work was a forgery of his own continued to prevail. Both at the time itself and later, not merely insinuations but direct charges were made to that effect. This was true, especially on the part of the adherents of Pope; and the less they knew, the more positive they were on the point. Take as a specimen of the assaults not unfrequently made the following lines from a poem written "by a young gentleman of Cambridge":

> "See Theobald leaves the lawyer's gainful train,
> To wrack with poetry his tortured brain;
> Fired or not fired, to write resolves with rage,
> And constant pores o'er Shakespeare's sacred page;
> — Then starting cries, I something will be thought,
> I'll write — then — boldly swear 't was Shakespeare wrote.
> Strange! he in poetry no forgery fears,
> That knows so well in law he'd lose his ears." [1]

The desire of saying something novel about Shakespeare — the prolific source of the extravagant, the absurd, and even the idiotic — has at times taken the shape of forgery. Experience has shown us that this is a temptation which only the stoutest virtue can resist. The antecedent and apparently inherent unreasonableness of any one ascribing a play of his own composition to the dramatist accordingly assumes, in the light of what has happened, almost the nature of probability.

At the same time, there is no real reason for attributing the authorship of the piece to Theobald, though as

[1] From 'The Modern Poets,' by a Young Gentleman of Cambridge, in 'Grub-Street Journal,' No. 98, November 18, 1731. Reprinted in 'Gentleman's Magazine' for November, 1731.

the manuscript has never been either produced or reproduced, we are unable to tell how much belongs to the original text and how much was added or altered in the revision. There are in the play palpable imitations of passages in Shakespeare's conceded works. Still, just as clear imitations of the dramatist can be found in his immediate successors, notably, for instance, in Massinger. At the outset it can be said of 'Double Falsehood' that it has many of the marks of an Elizabethan play, though it may perhaps be further admitted that there is nothing so distinctive, so characteristic of the period assigned to it that it could not have been produced by a clever copyist, familiar with its literature. Nor is there the slightest improbability in the play having been ascribed in the manuscript to Shakespeare. In that peculiarity it unquestionably had many companions. Three so designated, we have seen were included in the list of plays which met their fate at the hands of that great destroyer of our early drama, Mr. Warburton's cook. Nor is it in the least likely, if the assertion were untrue, that Theobald would have ventured to say, as he did in his preface, that one of the three manuscripts of the play in his possession was in the handwriting of Downes, the prompter. Downes was still living in the early part of the eighteenth century. His handwriting must have been well-known to some of the actors belonging to the Drury Lane Theater, to whom the work was submitted; and they above all others would be specially interested in the detection of a forgery.

All these assertions could have been disposed of easily at the time, if they were untrue. In that case, they

pretty certainly would have been. We can, consequently, feel safe in dismissing the supposition that the piece was the composition of Theobald himself. But, while it is reasonable to maintain that he was not its author, it is quite another thing to maintain that its author was Shakespeare. The internal evidence is amply sufficient of itself to dispose of an unsupported statement of this sort. There is scarcely a trace of the great dramatist in it, even of his best or worst manner. 'Double Falsehood' is a respectable production, neither better nor worse than scores of pieces of the period to which it is ascribed, though by a concurrence of circumstances one modified line of it, as we shall see later, has been raised to the rank of a stock quotation. Nor to counterbalance the internal evidence that it is not Shakespeare's, has there ever been furnished any external evidence that it is his. In truth, what facts exist for the determination of its possible date are against any such assumption. The play is founded upon a tale contained in Don Quixote. Shelton's translation of that work — the first translation of it ever made in English — was not published until after the time Shakespeare is generally conceded to have left London and taken up his residence in Stratford. To offset this, Theobald informs us of a tradition, which he had received from a nobleman who had supplied him with one of his copies, that it was given by the poet "to a natural daughter of his, for whose sake he wrote it in the time of his retirement from the stage." The tradition about the gift is as worthy of credence as the tradition about the natural daughter; though were the story true, we could be

somewhat consoled by the character of the piece for what has seemed Shakespeare's too early abandonment of theatrical production.

Men have now forgotten all about the play; but during the eighteenth century the question of its authorship was a subject of more or less discussion. Farmer reached very positive conclusions in regard to the matter. It could not be Shakespeare's, he said, "because in it *aspect* was accented on the first syllable and not on the final one." According to him that method of pronouncing the word did not exist till the middle of the seventeenth century. The observation was true of Shakespeare so far as Shakespeare's practice has been preserved; it was not true of that of all his contemporaries. Farmer had no hesitation in ascribing the piece to Shirley. It bore, according to him, every mark of that dramatist's style and manner. On the other hand, this same sort of internal evidence convinced Malone that it was the work of Massinger. No one thought of ascribing it to Theobald, it being the proper view to hold him utterly incapable of the poetic ability displayed in its creation. Gifford, who had an exceedingly favorable opinion of the play, would have denied his authorship of it on that ground alone. "Pope and his little knot of critics," he wrote, "affected to believe" that it was a production of Theobald's, not seeming to see the honor they thereby did him. In a comment on a line in Massinger's 'Picture,'

"Rich suits, the gay comparisons of pride,"

he pointed out that the use, common in our old dramatists, of *comparison* for *caparison* had been one of the

words in 'Double Falsehood' with which the writer of 'The Dunciad' and his partisans affected to make merry.[1] The employment of it in this signification, he implied, was evidence of the genuineness of the play, just as the censure of it was proof of the ignorance of the critic.

One further incident in Theobald's life is to be recorded. In September, 1730, Eusden, the poet laureate, died. The post at this time had lost all its dignity. The filling of it had come to be and to be considered nothing but a job. The last thing thought of either by recipient or bestower, in connection with it, was the possession of poetical genius. Theobald sought it, evidently unawed by the attack which had already been made upon him in 'The Dunciad,' or by the perception he must have had of the fact that if he secured the post he would be made not merely the further object of Pope's venomous satire, but would become the common butt of every poetaster in the land. His pursuit of the place, however, was not due in the least, as he said himself, to any vanity, but to a desire to assist his fortunes.[2] He had now become profoundly interested in Shakespearean investigations. He was engaged in bringing out a commentary upon the poet. The one thing for which he longed was a competency sufficient to enable him to devote himself uninterruptedly to studies which had begun to absorb all his thoughts and demanded for their successful prosecution all his time.

There is no question that his name was seriously con-

[1] Gifford's Massinger, vol. iii. p. 154.
[2] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 617, December, 1730.

sidered for the appointment. A poem of one of Pope's partisans, which, though published the following year, was written before the matter was decided, specifically mentioned Blackmore, Philips, Theobald, and Duck as candidates for the laureateship, and as possessed of merits so similar that it was impossible to tell which of them was likely to secure the coveted position from the Lord Chamberlain. Everything would be uncertain

"Till deep discerning Grafton should declare." [1]

Theobald had the support of many persons of influence, including the prime-minister, Sir Robert Walpole. For a time he apparently cherished high hopes of success. But after some weeks of fruitless attendance he had the mortification to find himself supplanted by Colley Cibber. The choice was an excellent one. If the best poet could not be had, the next best for such a post was the worst poet; and poor a versifier as Theobald was, Cibber was probably the wretchedest that could be found among the men of the time possessing any sort of ability whatever.

It was in one way undoubtedly fortunate for Theobald's fame that he failed. If the hostility of Pope could and did succeed in fastening upon him the reputation of dulness in a pursuit in which he exhibited conspicuous keenness and ability, it is no difficult matter to imagine what further associations would have come to be connected with his name, where the best he could have accomplished would have been worthless. Not but he was fully the equal of two or three who had already worn the laurel, and of others who were yet to wear it before the

[1] Harlequin Horace, by J. Miller (1731), p. 14.

eighteenth century expired. But none of them would ever have been lifted into the unpleasant prominence he would have attained from the unrelenting enmity of the most influential author of the time. Nor would anything he could have produced in the capacity of laureate have brought him credit with the unprejudiced. That could only be secured by what he had accomplished or was to accomplish in other fields. The future efforts of his life had already been determined by the publication of a work of a character entirely different from anything which he himself or any one else had yet produced. Beside it everything to which he had previously directed his attention was of subsidiary importance. With the appearance of this work begins the first and on the whole the fiercest of the controversies which have sprung up in regard to the text of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER IX

SHAKESPEARE RESTORED

On the last day of March, 1726, appeared Theobald's first attempt at textual criticism. It came out, as apparently did everything he wrote, under his own name. The full title of the work was 'Shakespeare Restored: or, a Specimen of the many Errors, as well committed, as unamended, by Mr. Pope in his late Edition of this Poet. Designed not only to correct the said Edition, but to restore the True Reading of Shakespeare in all the Editions ever yet publish'd.' This is the earliest of a long line of similar treatises which have had the same end in view. It was the pioneer work in a path which has since been trodden by thousands of feet. Yet of the honor, which in the case of other subjects has been willingly accorded to the pioneer, its author has been studiously defrauded. To the men of his own age the course he took seemed an innovation and came as a surprise. At the immediate moment it conferred upon him a widespread and well-deserved reputation. The desert still exists, but no longer the repute. It is well within bounds to say that his treatise surpasses in interest and importance any single one of its numerous successors. Yet it has been systematically decried, even by the men who have been under most obligation to

it, and upon its author has fallen an obloquy which time is never likely to clear away.

The volume entitled 'Shakespeare Restored' is known, even by sight, to so few save special students that a detailed description of its contents becomes advisable. It was a large, thin quarto, designedly made to correspond in size with the six quarto volumes of Pope's edition. It consisted of one hundred and ninety-four pages, of which the first one hundred and thirty-two were devoted almost exclusively to the consideration of the text of Hamlet. But an appendix of over sixty pages followed in finer type. In this, specimens were given of corrections of passages taken from thirty-two of the other plays. In fact the only ones in Pope's edition which did not receive some sort of illustrative comment were 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' 'As You Like It,' and 'Twelfth Night.' The emendations were of all sorts. They touched the pettiest as well as the most important matters. Naturally they were of varying merit. Illustrations were given of false pointings which were subversive of the sense, of omission of words, and even of lines necessary to it, of passages put into the margin which were essential to the comprehension of what preceded or followed. The work in consequence was mainly taken up with restoring the text where both Pope's care or carelessness had perverted the meaning. To Hamlet ninety-seven corrections purported to be given, though the number was really somewhat larger. The emendations to the other plays, which were contained in the appendix, were naturally more numerous. Of these there were one hundred and

seven nominally; actually there were one hundred and seventeen.

As the work was mainly given up to pointing out the errors in Pope's edition, and incidentally in Rowe's, few of the corrections, taken as they were from the early authorities, were Theobald's own contributions to the establishment of the text. But though these were few, they were important. The constructive criticism was of even higher value than the destructive. In this volume appeared some of those emendations so peculiarly happy that they have been adopted almost universally in modern editions. Such instances are always rare. Far from numerous have been proposed changes in the text of Shakespeare which have commanded the assent of every one. Besides the chosen few who on principle will never agree with the majority, there is no absurdity, however great, no interpretation involved by a particular reading, however strained or unnatural, which some men will not prefer to any alteration, however slight. Theobald has been more fortunate than most. In regard to several of the emendations first put forth in this volume there has been substantial, even if not perfect unanimity. These alterations too are of interest for the light they throw upon the abilities of the man, in view of the way in which he has been commonly spoken of down even to this period. The emendations here proposed were all his own; and though some of those produced later equalled them in importance, none surpassed them in felicity and ingenuity. They may be said, in truth, to suffer to some extent from their inevitableness. They belong to that class of correc-

tions in regard to which the wonder is, as soon as they are made, how they could ever have missed being made.

Certain of these are worth noting. About the change in 'Hamlet'[1] of "pious and sanctified bonds" into "pious and sanctified bawds," there has been difference of opinion; but as a general rule later editors have admitted this emendation into the text. But there has been substantial unanimity in the adoption of 'thirdborough' for 'headborough' in the Induction to the 'Taming of the Shrew'; of the representation of Alcides being beaten by his 'page' instead of his 'rage' in the 'Merchant of Venice';[2] of 'I prate' in the speech of Coriolanus[3] to his mother, instead of 'I pray;' of having "scotched the snake" in 'Macbeth,'[4] instead of having "scorched it;" of "the ne'er lust-wearied Antony" in Pompey's speech in 'Antony and Cleopatra,'[5] in place of "the near lust wearied Antony;" and in the same play the description of the flag or rush "lackeying" the varying tide instead of 'lacking' it.[6] It requires indeed a good deal of dulness to believe that emendations such as these — and their number could easily be increased — are the emendations of a dull man or of one whose most distinguishing characteristic is mere plodding industry. If they seem easy to us, now that the way has been shown, they did not seem easy once. They assuredly escaped the attention of the first two editors, neither of whom has ever been charged with slowness of perception. In fact, in the case of the example last mentioned, 'lacking' had been changed

[1] Act i., scene 3. [2] Act ii., scene 1. [3] Act v., scene 3.
[4] Act iii., scene 2. [5] Act ii., scene 1. [6] Act i., scene 4.

by Pope to 'lashing,' thus getting out of one difficulty by plunging into another.

To none of the alterations just recited has modern scholarship, as distinguished from personal preference, taken any exception save in one instance. This is to the substitution of 'scotch' for 'scorch' in 'Macbeth.' But even here it contents itself with showing that in the meaning there found 'scorch' and 'scotch' are merely variant forms of the same word. Consequently there was no need of making any emendation whatever. So there was not from the point of view of present linguistic investigation; from the point of view of general comprehension there was a good deal. The fact just stated was something that no one of Theobald's generation could be expected to know. It is probably not going too far to say that it was one which no one did know then or could have known. Even now it is known to but few. Under the circumstances, therefore, the slight change made may be deemed justifiable, even from the standpoint of strictest adherence to the text. Had it not been effected, had the original form been retained, an erroneous interpretation would have fastened itself upon the passage and would have become embedded in the popular conception of it. As a result, for more than a century and a half its meaning would have been wholly misunderstood. Theobald saved for the reader the genuine sense of the phrase with the slightest possible disturbance of the form of the word. He comprehended what his author wanted to say, even if he did not comprehend his way of saying it, if it were certainly his way of saying it. *Scorch*

in this sense of 'scotch' has never been common in any period of English literature. Even here it is easier to believe it a typographical error than the actual form used by the author.

This work furthermore is of interest not merely in the history of Shakespearean investigation but in the history of modern scholarship. It has the distinction of being, as Theobald justly claimed, "the first essay of literal criticism upon any author in the English tongue."[1] It was the earliest attempt to apply to a classic of our own language the methods which had been employed in establishing the text of Greek and Latin classics. It was at that time not only an untried but even an unheard-of proceeding. The success which Theobald met with was due to the thoroughness of his scholarship. With all the disadvantages under which he labored — and as we shall see later, these were incalculably great — he hit upon the right road. He both pointed out and exemplified the proper method of correcting the text. If he set out to make an alteration, he supported the change, whenever possible, by citation of extracts in which the new word or phrase introduced was shown to have been used elsewhere in the same way. These extracts were taken whenever possible, from Shakespeare, but sometimes from other dramatists of his time. No unauthorized assertions, no random conjectures took the place of investigation. In short, his method was the method of a scholar, and wherever he erred, it was the error of a scholar, and not of a hap-hazard guesser. His work

[1] Shakespeare Restored, p. 193.

and his rival's represent indeed the two kinds of emendations of Shakespeare's text which have been practised since his day. Every commentator belongs to the school of Theobald or of Pope. No one would entertain any question now as to which was the correct method to follow.

Several examples have already been given of the acumen displayed by Theobald in hitting upon a desirable alteration. They involve the least possible and yet most probable change required to convert into good sense what had seemed incapable of affording any satisfactory meaning. As an illustration both of his sagacity and his method, it is worth while to give here in full the history of what is probably the most famous single emendation to which the text of Shakespeare has ever been subjected; for while the result is known to all, only special students of the subject are acquainted with the process by which it was reached. From such a particular recital too, one gains a conception, such as no general statements can convey, of the condition of the original and of the ingenuity which has been brought to bear upon its restoration; for it is concerned with a passage which has the appearance of being corrupted out of all comprehension by some blunder of the type-setters. What to us is of further interest is the illustration it furnishes of the difference in spirit and method with which Theobald and Pope approached the rectification of passages obviously erroneous.

In the historic drama of 'Henry V.,' the death-bed scene of Sir John Falstaff is described by Mrs. Quickly. Before quoting any of her words it is necessary to observe that this play was first printed in quarto during

Shakespeare's lifetime and consequently before it came out in the folio of 1623. Between the text of these two editions there are great differences. The folio has double the number of lines which are found in the quarto. About the latter indeed there is a very general agreement among commentators that it is a pretty flagrant specimen of the stolen and surreptitious copies of which Heming and Condell had complained. No one has ever pretended that Shakespeare had anything whatever to do with its publication. The only way to explain its existence has been to suppose that it was secured for the pirates who printed it by a short-hand writer who was possessed of phenomenal ignorance, or who in this instance encountered unusual difficulties in the practice of his profession. Such as it is, however, it can be deemed one of the two original authorities for the text; but after what has just been said, it is manifest that the folio of 1623 is the only one to be seriously regarded. In this latter some of the circumstances attending the death of Falstaff are recounted in the following words, in which the original orthography and punctuation are here preserved:

"A made a finer end, and went away and it had been any Christome Child: a parted ev'n just between Twelve and One, ev'n at the turning o' th' Tyde: for after I saw him fumble with the Sheets, and play with Flowers, and smile upon his fingers end, I knew there was but one way; for his Nose was as sharpe as a Pen, and a Table of green fields."

It was the last words here cited which caused trouble —"his nose was as sharp as a pen and a table of green

fields." What possible sense could be made out of them? What is a table of green fields? What sort of a nose is it that is like such a table? Here, in the eyes of some, the imperfect pirated quarto of 1600 came to the relief of the despairing commentator. In that the sentence ended with the words, "his nose was as sharp as a pen." The "table of green fields" made no appearance at all. But it was not an easy matter to find an excuse for dropping the phrase. There was the apparently insuperable difficulty that the folio in which it was contained furnished a text incomparably superior to the quarto from which it was absent. On the mere authority of the latter, words could not well be thrown out which were found in the former. It was Pope who set out to answer any possible objection to the omission of the passage. In the following way he explained how this incomprehensible clause happened to be introduced into Dame Quickly's speech. "These words, 'and a table of green fields,'" he wrote, "are not to be found in the old editions of 1600 and 1608. This nonsense got into all the editions by a pleasant mistake of the stage editors, who printed from the common piecemeal written parts in the play-house. A table was here directed to be brought in (it being a scene in a tavern where they drink at parting), and this direction crept into the text from the margin. Greenfield was the name of the property-man in that time who furnished implements, etc., for the actors."[1] In his preface also he indicated these final words as having been inserted in the text through the ignorance of the transcribers.[2]

[1] Pope's Shakespear, vol. iii. p. 422.

[2] Ibid. vol. i., Preface, p. xviii.

This explanation had a very plausible sound. It is indeed an excellent specimen of guess-work emendation based purely upon assumption. To those who knew nothing of the matter, it seemed convincing. There were, however, difficulties connected with it, and the more closely it was examined, the greater became the difficulties. A quite obvious one was that if there had been any furnisher of stage-properties of the name of Greenfield, Pope was the only person to whom knowledge of the fact had been vouchsafed. But there were further difficulties in this explanation of the so-called pleasant mistake of the actor-editors, which did not escape the attention of Theobald. Here his practical experience with the theater stood him in good stead. He did not venture to deny absolutely the existence of the mysterious Greenfield, though he hardly succeeded in hiding the belief in his mythical character which he entertained. But conceding the fact of there being such a man, he pointed out that never in the prompter's books, still less in the piecemeal parts where properties or implements are indicated as wanted, is the name of the one given whose business it is to provide them. Nor again is the direction for furnishing these properties ever marked in the middle of the scenes for which they are needed. It is at their beginning or at some earlier page before the actors enter, that it appears. The words therefore could not have been taken from the margin into the text.

But the original difficulty still confronted him. How did the words get in if they did not belong there? If they belonged there, what did they mean? Theobald

gave one possible explanation of their introduction as being a stage direction in reference to the subsequent scene. But upon this he wisely laid no stress. He had, however, he said, another interpretation, which, if accepted, would permit the words to be regarded as part of the text. In his possession was an edition of Shakespeare containing some marginal conjectures of a gentleman who was then dead. By him the word 'table' had been converted into 'talked.' Upon this hint Theobald improved. Instead of changing 'table' to 'talked' he changed it to 'babbled,' or, as it was then often spelled, 'babled.' This latter was still nearer the form in the folio. The only alterations were the addition of a final *d* to the word and the more serious reduction to lower case of its initial letter. The passage was consequently made to read: "His nose was as sharp as a pen, and a babled of green fields."

The happiness of this emendation struck every one at once. Men who had suggested other alterations frankly admitted the superiority of this.[1] Pope himself was impressed by it, though he affected to treat the correction slightly and as a guess hardly worth much attention. In his comment upon it in his second edition he played upon the ignorance of the public as to the comparative value of the original authorities, though he was careful to make no further reference to Greenfield, who had filled so important a part in his original explanation. "Mr. Pope omitted the latter part," he wrote, "because no such words are to be found in any edition

[1] See, for instance, the 'Answer to Pope's Preface to Shakespeare,' by a Strolling Player (n. d. 1730, by John Roberts).

till after the author's death. However, the Restorer has a mind they should be genuine, and since he cannot otherwise make sense of 'em, would have a mere conjecture admitted." [1] It was in this characteristic way that Pope aimed to give the impression that it was Shakespeare who was responsible for his own reading, and to the player-editors — as he called Heming and Condell — was to be attributed the phrase which he had rejected.

Not such, however, has been the general attitude of the commentators who have followed. The dissenters from Theobald's emendation have been but few, and the reasons given for their dissent have been anything but convincing. So far from being discredited, the reading suggested has been recommended by the occasional efforts which have been made to substitute something else in its place. Warburton was the only one of the eighteenth-century editors who concurred with Pope in rejecting the phrase. All the rest adopted it, in some cases grudgingly; consoling themselves for the concession to Theobald's sagacity by printing Pope's ridiculous reason for the omission, and Warburton's more ridiculous attempt to justify it. Still, they adopted the emendation, for they saw nothing better to propose. The same statement is essentially true of the nineteenth-century editors. Collier was the only English one who introduced a different reading into the text. Instead of "and a table of green fields," he substituted "on a table of green frieze." Delius retained the original phrase, and made a painful effort to explain it — painful

[1] Pope's Shakespear, 2d ed., under 'Guesses, etc.' at end of vol. viii.

in both the earlier and later sense of the word. These are the only exceptions to the general unanimity with which Theobald's emendation has been received by later editors, who indeed, unlike their predecessors, have been cordial in their praise of it. Dyce, for instance, in his first edition remarked that he adopted it as a matter of course. Staunton, in his, spoke of the conjecture of Pope and "the equally atrocious sophistication of Mr. Collier's annotator" as needing only to be mentioned in order to be laughed at. In a later edition he declared that the emendation had now become so completely a part of the text that no editor would ever have the temerity to displace it. Such a prophecy, however, evinces a certain lack of familiarity with the courage of commentators. In this country White called it "the most felicitous conjectural emendation ever made to Shakespeare's text."

It is needless to multiply such expressions of opinion. There is, in fact, a general feeling on the part of most critics that if Shakespeare did not write the passage as it has been amended, he ought so to have written it. The fate of the commentator is usually to build a good deal worse than he knew. This is an instance where he builded a great deal better. For apparently Theobald himself did not fully appreciate his own emendation. He certainly neglected to say anything of the most natural and effective point that belongs to it. One thing, he tells us, that led him to make the change he did, was the statement that in equatorial seas the minds of sailors, who are attacked by the calenture, the fever of the tropics, are apt to run upon green fields, which contrast

so sharply with the waste of waters about them. But this could have only a slight connection with any thoughts that could have passed through the mind of the dying Falstaff or with the scenes which surrounded his bedside. If the words are interpreted as they have been amended, they are in full consonance with that human experience, every aspect of which the mind of Shakespeare seems to have comprehended in its all-embracing grasp. In that parting hour the thoughts of the dying man leap over the interval of manhood's years of riot and revel, of wasted opportunities and perverted energies, to go back to the scenes of childhood when, a careless and innocent boy, he wandered in fields which under summer skies were redolent with the freshness and fragrance of summer verdure. Such an interpretation is alike true to poetry and true to nature. Still, while we can hope and even believe that Shakespeare wrote the passage as amended, we unfortunately cannot insist upon it as an indisputable fact.

The emendations in this review of Pope's edition were, as has been said, entirely Theobald's own. The merit of them cannot therefore, by any ingenuity, be transferred to any one else. Fortunately for his reputation, he had not at this time become entangled with Warburton. Had he been so then, that cool traducer of his former friend would have contrived to give the impression, if not to make the direct assertion, that anything of special value in this treatise was the fruit of his own suggestion. It gives a still higher opinion of Theobald's knowledge and sagacity that besides the lack of those facilities under which at that time the best equipped of men labored, he suffered

at first from the want of facilities which were possessed by others, and in particular by the editor whom he criticised. It is clear that at the outset he had but few of the original authorities to consult. The only quarto of 'Hamlet' to which from his references he appears to have had access was that of 1637. Though he occasionally spoke of all the editions of Shakespeare, he did not then have in his hands the one most important, the folio of 1623. It is the second folio to which he refers and from which he quotes.

Pope indeed asserted, or rather insinuated, that Theobald had never seen the first edition. In so doing he unwittingly paid the highest sort of a compliment to the acumen of his critic. In 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' there is a blunder found in the text of the second folio and all the subsequent editions which had appeared up to this time. In every one of these Falstaff, in speaking of Mrs. Page, is represented as saying that sometimes "the beam of her view 'guided' my foot." For this verb Theobald substituted 'gilded,' which in the time of Shakespeare was frequently spelled 'guilded.' He believed then that the correction was his own.[1] When Pope brought out his second edition in 1728, he inserted this as the proper reading, but denied Theobald's claim of being its originator. "It is in the first folio edition," he said, "which, it hereby appears, he had never seen." In these words Pope is pretty certainly sincere and not in the least ironical. Yet it is something hard to believe. If his comments were serious, he was unconsciously commending Theobald's sagacity, besides furnishing the

[1] See Theobald's letter in the 'Daily Journal,' Nov. 26, 1728.

strongest sort of proof of having exhibited in his previous edition the carelessness with which he had been charged.

No one pretends that Theobald was invariably right in his emendations, or that he did not make alterations which are now regarded as either unnecessary or unjustifiable. He was little likely to claim infallibility for himself. There were conjectures he put forth in this treatise which he subsequently withdrew in his edition of Shakespeare. A correction of Hamlet, indeed, which is found in the body of this very work he retracted in the appendix.[1] There is this, however, to be said of the changes which he proposed. They were never wanton. They are always of the sort which are made by a man who has studied his subject, who has honestly striven to ascertain exactly what his author is aiming to express. Hence they usually convey a clear meaning, though to us it may not seem the best meaning. In the dearth of linguistic knowledge then prevailing there were two sorts of errors into which every one was specially liable to fall. One arose from the ignorance of the form or meaning of dialectic or obsolete words. The other and much more dangerous error resulted from the ignorance of the obsolete meanings of words still in common use.

From neither of these two classes of errors did Theobald escape. Yet the mistakes he made were never due to indifference or negligence; they sprang from the lack of knowledge which practically no one at that time possessed, and which under ordinary conditions no one could then hope to gain. Still, he rarely, if ever, shirked

[1] Shakespeare Restored, pages 119, 191.

any difficulties which he saw; he did the best he could to remove them with the means at his command. Let us observe his methods in instances where he failed. Take, in the first place, his treatment of an obsolete word occurring in Hamlet's soliloquy about his father,

> "So loving to my mother,
> That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
> Visit her face too roughly."

The difficulty is with the verb *beteem*. We give it here, or rather impose upon it, the signification of 'permit'; and such a sense the context seems imperatively to require. Yet there is nothing quite like this usage of it to be found elsewhere in our literature. It has almost invariably attached to it the meaning either of 'think fit' or of 'grant,' 'concede.' But the word itself has never been common. To Theobald and his immediate successors it was unknown. The situation was further obscured by the fact that in the first three folios, the form, disregarding slight orthographic variations, was *beteen;* in the fourth folio, this was further corrupted into *between*.

At this period no one knew of the existence of such a verb as *beteen* or *beteem*, the latter the form found in the quartos. Naturally no one had any conception of its meaning. One of the Restoration quartos met the difficulty boldly. For 'might not beteem,' it substituted 'permitted not.' In this it was followed by Rowe, and he by Pope, and he in turn by Warburton. But Theobald's scholarly instincts were too strong to accept and introduce into the text a word which had no

authority in its favor, and no likeness to the one it displaced. He, on his part, changed *beteen* into *let e'en*. In this, he was followed by nearly all the eighteenth-century editors until 1790, when Malone restored the *beteem* of the quartos. But it cannot be considered surprising that Theobald should have stumbled at a verb not only obsolete then, but always rare and used here too in a still rarer sense. With our present knowledge we can, perhaps, safely hold that his emendation was unnecessary. But, with the knowledge possessed by the men of his time, the alteration was one which involved the least possible violence to the text; for it preserved the meaning, while making but a slight change in the form. Had the word *beteem* not existed, we should even now have been cherishing this amendment as a happy solution of a perplexing difficulty.

The errors of the second class are necessarily more dangerous. In giving to a word in common use its present signification, instead of one it has discarded, we are cheating ourselves with the show of knowledge while losing its substance. No better illustration can be furnished of the difficulties of this kind which then beset an editor than what is afforded by a passage in 'Lear.' Gloucester has been plunged in a moment from the height of prosperity into irremediable misery. The loftiness of his position had given him a sense of security, had filled him with that careless confidence in his own future which becomes almost a second nature to those whom high place and long-continued good fortune have exempted, not merely from worldly reverses, but from the contemplation of such reverses as a possibility.

The calamity which has suddenly overtaken him leads him to reflect that this sense of security has been the agency that had brought about his fall. He sees that the possession of apparently boundless resources renders a man unobservant of the perils which threaten his fortunes, while the very lack of these resources tends to the advantage of him who has them not, by causing him to conduct himself providently and cautiously. "Too oft," he says, —

> "Our means secure us, and our mere defects
> Prove our commodities." [1]

The adjective *secure* had originally the sense of 'free from apprehension,' in accordance with the meaning of its Latin primitive. This it still retains. The signification naturally passed over to the verb derived from it, as is here exemplified. Theobald, like his contemporaries, was not, however, aware of the fact. He is certainly not particularly to blame for not knowing it, when for more than a century afterward editors succeeded in missing the meaning with infinitely greater facilities than he for acquiring it. Malone believed that *means* meant the same as *mean*. He therefore retained the form without understanding it. Steevens insisted that it was a mere typographical error. This valiant ignorance of what Gloucester was trying to say lasted indeed to a much later period. Theobald was at first disposed to accept Pope's emendation of *secure* into *secures* and of *means* into *mean*. According to this reading, the latter word would have the sense of 'low fortune,' 'the middle state.' But his natural acuteness

[1] Act iv., scene i.

made him hesitate. He suspected the altered text not to be genuine. It made a fair sense, but it did not seem to him the best sense under the circumstances. Therefore he proposed to read 'ensnare' for 'secure.' But, by the time he came to bring out his own edition, this alteration had clearly struck him as too violent. In consequence he returned to Pope's unsatisfactory emendation, with the result of keeping nearer to the words but of gètting farther away from the sense than if he had adopted the unauthorized *ensnare*.

There are occasionally faults far more objectionable than these. In some instances, the criticisms were of the very pettiest nature. There were a few that fully deserved the name of "piddling," which his great antagonist contrived to fasten upon them all in the minds of many. These were to be found most frequently in the observations upon Hamlet. But the remarks upon that play constituted apparently the principal portion of his review, and for that reason any criticism there occurring would be sure to attract attention. Theobald took Pope seriously to task for using *devise*, so spelled, as a noun. He informed him magisterially that it must be restored to *device*. It is, perhaps, not advisable for us to assume too much virtue over this particular exhibition of inanity. The lawless orthography of the English tongue often begets something of the same doting affection for it which mothers occasionally manifest towards ill-favored children. Ample opportunity has been furnished to men much greater than this restorer of Shakespeare's text, and fully improved by them, to exhibit a similar state of mind.

Worse even than this, some of Theobald's emendations were corrections of the pointing where the sense was not affected in the slightest by the change. He seems to have shared in the belief which takes possession of so many, that the particular punctuation which he had chosen to adopt was correct in its very essence and was not a matter of convention. His remarks, accordingly, were more worthy of an opinionated proof-reader than of the editor of a classic. These were not very many, it is true, nor did he give them much space; but few as they were, there were too many, and the space given them was too much. They furnished a kind of plausible justification for the contempt with which Pope and his adherents spoke of the whole process of making changes in the punctuation, as if it were something which did not concern the meaning of the sentence, and as if indifference to it were merely a disregard of an unimportant prescription of the printers. It gave them a handle for misrepresentation of which they were not slow to avail themselves, and which they assuredly improved to the uttermost. A man's ability is measured not by his poorest work but by his best. Even as a commentator, it has been at times the peculiar fortune of Theobald to be judged by his worst.

CHAPTER X

THEOBALD'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS POPE

It is not too much to say that the publication of 'Shakespeare Restored' created in the limited literary circle to which it appealed what would now be called a sensation. Textual criticism will never constitute an attractive subject for those who read merely or mainly for amusement. Nor can he who devotes himself to it expect, however successful he be, to gain much popularity with the mass of even highly educated men. But by the genuine students of Shakespeare, who were now beginning to form a recognizable body, the work was welcomed with enthusiasm. To them it was a revelation of the difficulties with which the plays were beset, of the need of an intelligent and thorough-going revision of the text, and of the means that must be employed to carry it into effect. The process was at once recognized as simple. But, simple as it was, it had never before occurred to any one to practise it. For the first time men saw pointed out, and to no small extent adequately illustrated, the proper method of attacking the corruptions in the text of an English classic and of restoring it to its pristine integrity.

The impression produced by the treatise cannot be gainsaid. Contemporary critical estimates found then

indeed but little public expression. Those were not the days in which authors and what they wrote were celebrated in the columns of every newspaper. Volumes were very rarely devoted to them or their works. References to the greatest of them were very infrequent in number and were scanty in length. It was usually in short items in newspapers, or in brief essays mainly in the form of letters that attention was called to anything they had done. But he who goes through the drudgery of familiarizing himself with these obscure sources of information speedily becomes aware that with his publication of 'Shakespeare Restored' Theobald came at once into prominence. During the years immediately following the appearance of this treatise, his reputation was in certain particulars very high. Deference was paid to him as the greatest Shakespearean scholar of the time. The estimate, too, arising from this work, was steadily raised by the few further emendations which he from time to time put forth.

A few months after his review of Pope's edition was published another correction by him of the text of Shakespeare came out in the 'London Journal.' It was contained in a private letter to a friend, who communicated it to the newspaper. The emendation was of the following passage in 'Coriolanus' as it appeared in Pope's edition:

> "I think he 'll be to Rome
> As is the Asprey to the fish; he 'll take it
> By sovereignty of Nature."

Theobald was fully justified in observing, in his comment upon these lines, that Pope followed implicitly

preceding editions without guessing at what his author meant. Plain as it appears now, it was not so obvious then. All the authorities up to this time had had the form *asprey* or *aspray*. What did it mean? The multiplication of voluminous dictionaries has made us all aware that there is not and never has been any such word as *asprey*. But this was not and indeed could not be known then. Accordingly the correction of it into *osprey* was not so certain. Furthermore, the reference to the sovereignty of nature possessed by it, whatever was meant by the phrase, made any change doubtful. The passage was difficult of explanation, and neither Rowe nor Pope had thought of explaining it. Theobald was the first not only to point out the proper reading, but to establish it beyond question. He called attention to a popular belief, which though forgotten had once been prevalent, that the bird called the osprey captured fish by the fascination with which nature had endowed it. In justification of the change of spelling and in explanation of the meaning, he cited extracts from the English naturalist, William Turner, and the Swiss Gesner. This settled definitely for all time the justice of the correction as well as the meaning of the passage. Pope adopted it in his second edition, and Warburton followed with the sneering comment "spelt right by Mr. Theobald." Yet rarely has even so much credit as this been accorded him by succeeding editors.[1]

[1] This emendation was published in the 'London Journal' of Saturday, Sept. 3, 1726. Theobald's letter is dated August 23. The friend to whom it was addressed was Concanen; at least some of the comments introducing it appeared later in his 'Speculatist.' It was reprinted from the original manuscript in Nichols, vol. ii. p. 189.

But whatever the attitude of later times or of a later period in his own time, no injustice was done him at the outset. So great was the repute of his work that for the three or four years following its publication he was almost invariably referred to, when mentioned, as the "Author of 'Shakespeare Restored.'" He was so styled in the benefit which was given him at Covent Garden in May, 1727,[1] as a tribute to the knowledge and sagacity he had displayed in determining the true text of the great dramatist. Pope indeed, with real or affected contempt, made it a point to term him the Restorer; but if he was satirical in so designating him, others were sincere. There was ample reason for their entertaining the feelings they did. The correctness of the methods he had employed, the invariable plausibility and the frequent happiness of the emendations proposed commended them at once to all interested in the study of Shakespeare. Nor were his failures seen to be failures in the little knowledge of the subject which then existed.

It was therefore not unnatural that regret should be expressed that to him had not been committed the task of editing the plays. Very probably many of these utterances came from personal friends; but in some instances certainly their utterers had become his friends because they appreciated the work he had accomplished. One of these men was Concanen. Not many weeks after the appearance of 'Shakespeare Restored' he sent to 'Mist's Journal,' though not under his own name, a communication which contained a warm eulogy of that treatise. He spoke of Theobald as one whom he did not

[1] May 5, 1727, Genest's 'English Stage,' vol. iii. p. 188.

have the good fortune to know; but his emendations had revealed critical knowledge of the dramatist and mastery of the learning essential to his right comprehension — so much so that it was a matter of keen regret that it had not fallen to his lot to revise the text.[1] In thus speaking he gave voice to what came to be more and more the general opinion.

Mention has already been made of 'Mist's Journal;' and as further references to it will appear, it is advisable to give at this point some definite information about it and the part it played in the political and literary life of the times. It was established in December, 1716, by a printer named Nathaniel Mist. A Tory organ of the extremest type, with sympathies obviously Jacobite, it led for about a dozen years a checkered existence. It was constantly going to the danger line in attacking the government, and was itself in constant danger of being suppressed by the government. Its founder underwent to the full the trials which in those days were liable to befall newspaper men who were in opposition to the administration. He was frequently arrested, was fined, was committed to prison. He experienced the not uncommon fortune of the journalist of that period of standing in the pillory. The periodical itself had various vicissitudes. Whole numbers of it were occasionally seized. Grand juries presented it, expressed abhorrence

[1] 'Mist's Journal,' No. 54, May 7, 1726. The signature to this letter is *Philo-Shakespear*, but Concanen's authorship is proved by the fact that it contains a number of sentences which are found in an essay of his contained in the volume entitled 'The Speculatist,' published in 1730 (page 185). For a further expression of a similar feeling see the communication of A. B. in the 'London Journal' of May 28, 1726.

for it, and applied to it numerous uncomplimentary adjectives. It at times strove to act with moderation. But its zeal against the government was never long abated, nor the expression of it long tempered with caution.

The end came at last. An article in the number for August 24, 1728, signed Amos Dudge, and attributed to the Duke of Wharton,[1] purported to give an account of matters in Persia, which country, according to it, was said to be ruled by an usurper. It was of too pronounced a Jacobite flavor for Hanoverian palates to tolerate. The whole machinery of government was set in motion against the paper and every one connected with it. In the following month it gave up the ghost. From its ashes, however, sprang up at once 'Fog's Weekly Journal.' This opened with a letter from Mist himself, who some time before had fled to France, acquainting the readers of the new paper with the fact that he had lately been seized with an apoplectic fit, of which he had instantly died. This of course was not true, either actually or symbolically, of the man; but in certain ways it was true of the journal to which he had given his name. That had been for a long while a chosen medium, if not the chosen medium, through which writers, without regard to their political opinions, expressed their views on matters connected with literature. During the year 1728, in particular, it contained, as long as it lasted, no small number of communications emanating from the friends or enemies of Pope. But with its suppression this distinctive peculiarity disappeared. It was

[1] The Bee, vol. i. p. 9, Feb. 10, 1733.

not a characteristic which particularly marked its successor.

Were it not that Pope labored to produce an impression to the contrary, it would be entirely needless to say that Theobald's connection with 'Mist's Journal,' so far as he had any connection with it at all, was purely literary. With politics he never meddled, though his sympathies, unlike the poet's, were with the government. From the very beginning his interest had been mainly in scholastic pursuits. His emendations of Shakespeare were as little the result of chance guess or hap-hazard conjecture as they were the offspring of dulness. On the contrary, they were the ripened fruit of years of patient investigation and close reflection. The knowledge which Theobald had already displayed in his review of Pope's edition had not been got up for the occasion. He had been a diligent student of Elizabethan literature long before he could have anticipated appearing as a commentator on the works of its greatest representative, or as a critic of their editor. As a student of the period Shakespeare had naturally received his chief attention. It will not be surprising that the familiarity he acquired with his diction should be especially noticeable in his later writings, such for instance as the so-called dramatic opera of 'Orestes.' In this throughout there is an imitation of the manner of the dramatist so far as that manner can be imitated. In reading it we are reminded almost too frequently of passages in his plays, especially 'Lear,' 'Macbeth' and 'The Tempest.' It is, to be sure, a dreadfully long road from Shakespeare to Theobald. Still it is plain that the inspiration received from the former gave

occasionally to the lines of the latter a poetic dignity not elsewhere observable in his dramatic production.

But 'Orestes' was brought out in 1731. At that time Theobald had been long occupied in the preparation of his edition of Shakespeare. We should therefore expect to find him then so thoroughly familiar with the writings of his author as to be affected consciously or unconsciously by their influence. But this same intimate acquaintance with the dramatist's method of expression was manifested in a poem which was published while he was still under thirty years of age. This piece was entitled 'The Cave of Poverty' and came out in the first half of 1715. It is perhaps not straining the evidence too far to suspect that the dedication of it to Lord Halifax may have been one of the petty additional causes that led Pope to assail that nobleman, twenty years after his death, in his 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,' when he referred to him as "full-blown Bufo puffed by every quill;" for the poet's wide-embracing dislike extended not only to those he deemed his enemies, but to the friends and patrons of his enemies.

After the appearance of 'The Dunciad' it became the fashion to sneer at all of Theobald's poetry. It has remained the fashion ever since. Even those who have recognized his superiority as an editor have joined in this chorus of depreciation. No one need feel himself called upon to stand up for the merit of the work just mentioned, though it was one of which the author himself thought a good deal. He declared that he had written it with a particular pleasure, and that he looked at it with the affection of a fond parent. Nor was his

partiality unjustifiable from his point of view. It is much the best thing of the kind he ever wrote. It is of course not worth reading now save by the student of literary history. At the same time there is no reason why it should be made the subject of special disparagement. Plenty of poetry of that period, no better in quality, and some much worse, met then with no small share of praise, and even at this late day is occasionally mentioned with respect.

To us, however, whatever interest and importance the piece possesses is closely connected with the name of the greatest of England's men of genius. The title-page professed that the poem was written in imitation of Shakespeare. The dedication to the Earl of Halifax declared the imitation to be very superficial. This is something that might have been expected to be the case, had Theobald been possessed of far greater powers than he actually had; but his further assertion that it extended only to the borrowing of some of his words is very much of an under-statement. The truth is that the production throughout adopts and reflects Shakespeare's phraseology. There is frequently in it a faint echo of his style, and of the peculiar melody of his versification. Such characteristics could have been manifested only by one who had become thoroughly steeped in his diction, and especially in that of his two principal poems. These were so far from being well known at that time that they were hardly known at all.

When it came to form and vocabulary the imitation is much more plainly discernible. 'The Cave of Poverty' is written in the six-line stanza of the 'Venus

and Adonis,' a measure then hardly ever used and none too familiar since. In the phraseology the influence of Shakespeare is particularly apparent. The plays of the dramatist abound in compound adjectives. They are even more numerous in his two principal poems. Theobald imitated him in this practice. He not only coined on his own account a pretty large number of these compounds, but he adopted a large number which he found in the writings of his great predecessor. From 'The Rape of Lucrece' he borrowed full fifteen, sometimes coupling them with the same substantives, as 'fiery-pointed sun,' 'tear-distained eye' and 'blue-veined violets.' The adaptations from the plays were on a smaller scale, though among them occur some of the most noteworthy employed by the dramatist. There are, for instance, the 'tender-hefted' of 'Lear' and the 'wonder-wounded' of 'Hamlet.' Furthermore there were to be found in this piece of Theobald's a large number of Shakespearean words and phrases with which few were familiar then, and not too many now. Such, for illustration, are 'copesmate,' 'bateless' and 'askaunce their eyes,' all three taken from 'The Rape of Lucrece.' But there further appear in it the 'gallow' of 'Lear,' the 'agnize' of 'Othello,' the 'tristful' of 'Hamlet,' the 'callet' of several plays, the 'rebate the edge' of 'Measure for Measure.' The way he used these words and phrases and others that could be mentioned, derived from Shakespeare, showed that he knew what they meant — a knowledge to which several of his detractors never attained.

'The Cave of Poverty' never met, it is likely, with any remarkable success. Had it been indeed a far better

work than it was, the measure would have doomed it to comparative failure in an age which tolerated certain other forms of verse, but cared mainly for the heroic couplet. Yet until Pope fell foul of its author it was usually spoken of with a good deal of respect. Then the attitude of men was all changed, and it has continued changed to this day. Nowhere is there ever much of independent judgment; but in literary criticism there is less than anywhere else. Once let a damaging view be taken of a work or of a writer by a person in a position to make his opinions known and respected, it will be adopted and re-echoed by multitudes, even if they are perfectly well aware that the depreciatory estimate is due to prejudice or personal dislike. Ignorance continues what malice originated. The hostile view taken is at last embalmed for all time in books of reference. From generation to generation the same remarks, the same misstatements, and frequently the same inanities continue to be repeated by the whole herd of critics, without examination and without reflection. Never has any author furnished in so many ways more signal proofs of the truth of this observation than has Theobald.

Not alone in this poem had been indicated Theobald's capacity for engaging in the work which at that time he had not even contemplated. His periodical publication, 'The Censor,' gave abundant manifestation of his interest in the literature of the Elizabethan age. It purported to be written by a descendant of Ben Jonson of surly memory; but the references to Shakespeare and the quotations from him occur much more numerously

than in the case of any other author mentioned; and the tribute of praise is also much more unequivocal.[1] Such things show unmistakably who it was that then occupied his thoughts. Theobald suffered, it is true, like the rest of his contemporaries, from the deep-seated sorrow of the age that the greatest of poets lacked knowledge of the poetic art; but he mercifully refrained from making his affliction conspicuous. In fact, more than once a suspicion was faintly expressed that the very ignorance of the dramatist might have been on the whole a benefit to his work.

Yet with all his admiration for the author and familiarity with his writings, there is no reason to believe that Theobald then purposed to turn the knowledge of him he possessed to the use he later did. It is of course possible, it is perhaps probable, that he may have dreamed of bringing out an edition of Shakespeare; but if so, it could have been only a dream. No one would have then recognized or conceded his qualifications for the task. For him, unknown and unfriended, subscribers could not have been secured. No publisher would have felt justified in running the risk of engaging in such an undertaking. Still, as Theobald was profoundly interested in the author himself, as he constantly made his works the subject of special study, the condition of his text would necessarily force itself upon his attention. But it was the accident of the publication of Pope's long-heralded and pompously proclaimed edition which brought him into the field as a commentator.

[1] There are references to Shakespeare and quotations from or discussions of his writings in 'The Censor,' in numbers 7, 10, 16, 17, 18, 26, 36, 41, 48, 54, 60, 63, 70, 73, 75, 84, 87, and 95.

It would be a gross error, however, to assume that in doing as he did he was actuated by the slightest personal hostility to the man whose work he criticised. Indeed at the outset of his career Theobald was so far from expecting ever to become an opponent of Pope that he can be reckoned among his warmest admirers. A poem of his on the death of Queen Anne, written in the heroic measure, and entitled 'The Mausoleum,' came out in 1714. Like nearly all of such occasional pieces it was both pretentious and wretched. It contained, however, lines clearly suggested by those of his great contemporary. Furthermore in the course of it he paid him a personal compliment. He spoke of the art of one

> "who by the god inspired,
> Could make Lodona flow and be admired."

To leave no doubt in the mind of any reader as to the person meant, he appended the following note: "Mr. Pope and his 'Windsor Forest.'" A few years later he expressed himself even more fervently in one of the essays of 'The Censor.' In it he praised in most extravagant terms the version of the eight books of the 'Iliad' which had then appeared. "The spirit of Homer," he said, "breathes all through this translation, and I am in doubt whether I should most admire the justness of the original, or the force and beauty of the language, or the sounding variety of the numbers; but when I find all these meet, it puts me in mind of what the poet says of one of his heroes, that he *alone* raised and flung with ease a weighty stone that two common men could not lift from the ground; just so one single person has per-

formed in this translation what I once despaired to have seen done by the force even of several masterly hands."[1]

In truth Theobald's admiration for his great contemporary may be said to have passed over into unjustifiable partisanship. He took frequent occasion in the periodical just mentioned to signalize his devotion to Pope by making what seem unprovoked assaults upon Pope's stoutest antagonist, Dennis. Him he designated by the title of Furius. He spoke of him as an object of pity, rather than of the laughter and contempt which were his daily portion.[2] In one instance he went to the unwarrantable length of saying that Furius ought to be under obligation to him for his attack, for it would give him the opportunity of contributing to his own support by writing twelve-penny worth of criticism in reply.[3] In fine, he affected to treat Dennis with the same air of superiority which Pope was subsequently to manifest towards himself. The veteran critic, as we have seen, had not been slow to retort in his usual slang-whanging style. But by the time Theobald's review of the edition of Shakespeare had appeared, all these differences must have been made up. In that work he paid Dennis a direct and probably well-deserved compliment for his intimate acquaintance with the works of the dramatist.[4] It was not an observation calculated to add to his great contemporary's equanimity, or to increase his regard for its author.

[1] The Censor, No. 33, January 5, 1717.
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Ibid.* No. 70, April 2, 1717.
[4] Shakespeare Restored, p. 181.

This change of front accordingly led Pope to revive, in the notes to 'The Dunciad,' the memory of these early quarrels, which had been largely due to the partiality exhibited in his own behalf by the man he was now seeking to disparage. He quoted the abusive terms which Theobald and Dennis had applied to each other. It is one of the singular results which followed the publication of this satire that the writer of it was not only assailed for his version of the 'Iliad,' but the hero of it was likewise taken to task for having praised this version in his periodical essays. The former, it was said, with a comical and unparalleled assurance had undertaken to translate Homer from Greek, of which he did not know one word, into English of which he understood almost as little. Along with this the latter was vituperated for his "idiot zeal" in behalf of the translation.[1] Theobald must have felt at the appearance of this attack that he was exposed to a double fire. It was certainly hard to be at one and the same time an object of Pope's satire for having exposed his blunders as a commentator and to be railed at by the assailants of Pope for having exalted him as a poet.

It is possible that Theobald's efforts to ingratiate himself with the most prominent man of letters of his time had not met with much success. He certainly failed to secure his name as a subscriber to his proposed edition of Æschylus. This may have abated the warmth of the feeling with which the inferior writer had been disposed to regard the superior one. Still, it is manifest that it was from no sentiment of hostility that he put forth his

[1] The Popiad, 1728, pp. 1, 5.

review of Pope's edition of Shakespeare. He not only refrained from exhibiting the feeling, he disclaimed it. Throughout his treatise, he was personally respectful to the man he criticised. In fact, he professed admiration for him, though it is clear that it was admiration for him as a poet, and not as a commentator. "I have so great an esteem for Mr. Pope," he wrote in one place, "and so high an opinion of his genius and excellencies, that I beg to be excused from the least intention of derogating from his merits in this attempt to restore the true reading of Shakespeare." [1] In another place, he enrolled himself specifically in the list of the poet's admirers.[2]

But no one could criticise Pope and expose his real or fancied shortcomings without subjecting himself to his resentment. Knowing, as we do now his character and methods, there is something almost guileless in Theobald's remark at the close of his treatise, that while he expected to undergo attacks of wit for what he had done, he should have no great concern about those which might proceed from a generous antagonist. Where he was mistaken, it would gratify him to be corrected, for the public would be sure to reap the advantage. "Wherever I have the luck," he added, "to be right in any observation, I flatter myself Mr. Pope himself will be pleased that Shakespeare receives some benefit." [3] There may be room for difference of opinion as to how Theobald would have felt at having any blunders of his own pointed out; there can be none as to how such a proceeding would affect the mind of the man whom in

[1] Shakespeare Restored, Introduction, p. iii.
[2] Ibid. p. ii.
[3] Ibid. p. 194.

his innocence he characterized as a generous antagonist. It would be difficult to impart joy to the heart of any author by showing up his errors; in the case of Pope, it would have been absolutely impossible. Theobald was speedily to learn that lesson to his heart's content.

Dr. Johnson tells us, in his life of Pope, that Spence's review of the translation of the 'Odyssey' was the poet's first experience of a critic without malevolence. Untrue as this statement was in general, in regard to the particular work he had in mind, it was absurdly untrue. Johnson was referring to the 'Essay on the Translation of the Odyssey,' the first part of which Spence brought out in June, 1726, and the second part in August, 1727. In it the writer professed to take into dispassionate consideration the beauties and the blemishes of that version. This work was highly thought of in the eighteenth century. Few pieces of criticism have ever, at any time, attained so much repute with so little justification for it. The enthusiastic praise it evoked seems now almost incomprehensible. Joseph Warton, for illustration, went into raptures over it. With a delightful unconsciousness of what his words necessarily implied as to his own estimate of himself, he paid the following glowing tribute to its excellence. "I speak from experience," he remarked, "when I say I know no critical treatise better calculated to form the taste of a young man of genius than this 'Essay on the Odyssey.'" To show that his opinion was not due to the partiality of intimate personal friendship which he enjoyed with the author, he added that it was concurred in by three persons from whom there could be no appeal. The three men whose

judgment, as reported by him, was to bind that of all coming times, were Akenside, Bishop Lowth, and James Harris.[1]

Posterity, however, has failed to be awed by this formidable array of names. It has been much more disposed to accept Johnson's dictum that Spence was a weak and conceited man. Still, it is delightful to have lack of malevolence declared by the same authority to be a distinguishing characteristic of this Essay. Johnson's further remark that the poet was little offended by it has been improved upon by later writers, who tell us that Pope exhibited the loftiness of his character by not taking the criticism amiss, and becoming instead the close personal friend of the author. It would have required a peculiar temperament to feel annoyance or irritation at the view of the version of the epic which was taken by Spence. The most sensitive of souls might be expected to bear with equanimity the charge that his translation of the 'Odyssey' was faulty because it was superior to the original. As a matter of fact, we know that Pope was delighted with it, as he had good reason to be. His coadjutor, Fenton, declared that if what appeared in this 'Essay' was the worst that could be said of the version, he would be criticised into a much better opinion of it than he had previously entertained. He was inclined to believe, he wrote to Broome, that the world would fancy they had employed a friend pretendedly to attack them, or perhaps that they had written it themselves.[2]

[1] Warton's Pope, vol. i. in 'Life of Pope,' p. xxxvi, 1797.

[2] Letter of June 10, 1726, Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 720.

Never, indeed, was more abject deference paid to a great writer under the pretence of correcting his errors. The direct censure was conveyed in such a way as to involve the highest indirect praise. The passages with which fault was found were, it was implied, not really bad in themselves; they were bad because they were so good. They were unfaithful to the original. Where that was simple, the translator had ornamented it, had elevated it, had given it majesty. Even for venturing to take mild exceptions of this complimentary character, Spence was profuse in his apologies. He further made up for the censure, if by any stretch of language it can be called censure, by bespattering the man he was theoretically criticising with the grossest adulation. He was not content with pointing out place after place in the translation where Pope had improved upon Homer. In general terms, he celebrated him as the one who had shown the noblest genius for poetry in the world. He paid the highest tribute to the generosity of his nature and the virtue of his soul. He characterized those who had presumed to find fault with his writings and character as Zoiluses and animals. The only redeeming feature in all the fulsome flattery of this treatise is that Spence said nothing more than he honestly believed. His sincerity cannot be questioned, whatever we may think of his sense.

This feeble essay, masquerading under the guise of a critical examination, was designated during the eighteenth century as useful and pleasing and just. To the men who so regarded it, Theobald's review of the edition of Shakespeare might seem malevolent. That certainly

is the inference to be drawn from Dr. Johnson's remark. Yet, such a view of it would be about the farthest possible remove from the truth. There was not the slightest trace of malevolence in 'Shakespeare Restored.' There was nothing in the volume which passed the bounds of legitimate criticism. Yet, while this can be said with perfect justice, while indeed it is the precise truth, it is not the whole truth. We all act from mixed motives, and it would be idle to pretend that Theobald in his review was animated by no other feeling than the desire to rectify the text of his favorite author. It furnished him an opportunity to distinguish himself in a field where he could not fail to be aware of his own excellence. There was, undoubtedly, a spice of vanity in his anxiety to show to the world that in one respect he was far superior to the most eminent man of letters of his time. Nor did he throughout his review maintain a careful regard for the sensitive feelings of the writer he was criticising. The subsidiary title of his treatise was itself of a somewhat aggressive nature. That he should term his work "a specimen of the many errors as well committed as unamended by Mr. Pope" cannot be deemed conciliatory. In three or four places he spoke with a good deal of severity of the negligence and carelessness which had been exhibited in the revisal of the text. He called it inexcusable.

He did something worse. He showed that it was inexcusable. Unpleasant inferences in this respect could not fail to be drawn from some of his exposures. He pointed out, for illustration, that in the second part of Henry VI., the "bastard hand" of Brutus is represented

in this much-vaunted edition, as having stabbed Pompey the Great. The somewhat ridiculous blunder was due to the disappearance of a line.[1] This line, however, had been found in all editions except the second one of Rowe. Out of that it had been accidentally dropped, it is clear, while the work was going through the press. Its absence from the following edition, however, could hardly be called the accident of an accident. There was but one way of explaining the error. Pope's edition had been printed from Rowe's second edition. This was proper enough. What was censurable was that it was so far from having being subjected to any thorough revision that a gross blunder of this sort, unfaithful to the truth of history as well as to the text of Shakespeare, had passed unnoticed and unrecorded. This was far from agreeing with the claim made for the work in the preface that it was based throughout upon the original authorities.

The errors of this sort which were pointed out — and the list has been by no means exhausted — were rarely accompanied by any special censure. Theobald usually set forth the exact facts, and left the reader to draw the inference. But so long as the positive offence of detecting the blunder was committed, the merely negative merit of abstention from its denunciation was not calculated to allay the wrath of the man whose carelessness

[1] The lines in 'Henry VI' (Act iv., scene 1) read as follows:

> "A Roman sworder and banditto slave
> Murther'd sweet Tully; Brutus' bastard hand
> Stabb'd Julius Cæsar; savage islanders
> Pompey the Great; and Suffolk dies by pirates."

The third line was dropped out in Pope's first edition. It was restored in the edition of 1728.

had been exposed. Undoubtedly, it would have been just to give Pope credit for the work he actually accomplished, meager as it was when contrasted with what it purported to be. But such action on Theobald's part was desirable as a tribute to abstract justice, not to any benefit he would have received for it at the hands of the angry poet. From the experience he went through in other cases, we may be sure that any admission of the sort would have been wrested to his disadvantage. While, therefore, it might have been better to treat Pope's flagrant shortcomings with more deference; while it might have been courteous, in consideration of his exalted position, to refrain from criticism of any sort, it is perfectly correct to say that there was no malevolence in it. Assuredly, if there was, all criticism which aims to correct obvious error, is malevolent. Doubtless it was impolitic to say the things he did. But the fact remains that the things he said were true; and Shakespeare's text would have lost by their suppression the benefit which Pope's feelings would have received. For it must be kept in mind that it was the exposure itself of his errors that roused the poet's resentment, and not the spirit in which the exposure was made. To a slight extent that, too, contributed to his irritation. There was exhibited by Theobald a consciousness of superiority which it would have been wisdom to dissemble, though it was not malignity to manifest; for his criticism throughout was that of a man who knew his subject upon the work of one who showed on page after page the results of half-knowledge and inadequate investigation.

CHAPTER XI

POPE'S PRELIMINARY ATTACK

THE revelation which Theobald had made of the inattention and incapacity displayed by Pope in his edition of Shakespeare stirred the poet's nature to its inmost depths. No one of the irritable race of authors has ever been more sensitive than he to criticism of any sort. The slightest censure galled him, the slightest reflection upon his character or conduct irritated him beyond measure. In this instance his natural sensitiveness was intensified by the consciousness, entertained though unavowed, that the criticism was deserved. In attacks to which his other works had been subjected, he could not but be aware that even if faults in certain particulars were pointed out, they were far more than offset by merits which the most grudging envy was compelled to acknowledge. No compensation of this sort presented itself here. There was little to relieve the wretchedness of failure. However much, therefore, he might in public underrate and misrepresent the criticism which had exposed his shortcomings, however much he might affect to despise both it and its author, in his secret heart he indulged in no illusions as to its justice. It is very noticeable that much as he boasted of many things, and at times with good reason, he never

boasted of his edition of Shakespeare. He rarely spoke of it; and when he did his attitude was distinctly apologetic. It is expressed in the note found first in 'The Dunciad' of 1736, that he undertook the edition of Shakespeare merely because no one else would.[1]

Theobald's criticism, moreover, had come out at an unpropitious moment. Pope's friends and flatterers were just on the point of celebrating his superiority as an editor, as they had been wont to celebrate his superiority as a translator. They stood ready and eager to praise his work on Shakespeare, not because they had the slightest knowledge of how it had been performed, but because his name was associated with it; and they would have praised it just as ardently and unintelligently had the execution of it been far poorer than it actually was. In fact, one tribute of the kind had already been paid when it was too late for the author to recall it. In June, 1726, the final instalment of the version of the 'Odyssey' was delivered to subscribers. At the conclusion of the notes he had prepared, Broome, not content with signing the false statement as to the respective shares which Fenton and he had had in the translation, burst forth into a glowing poetical panegyric upon the man who had induced him to make the false statement. In the course of it he celebrated in the following words the ability displayed by Pope in editing Shakespeare and the gratification which the ability displayed would bring to the dead dramatist:

"If ought on earth, when once the breath is fled,
With human transport touch the mighty dead;

[1] Dunciad, Book 3, line 332.

Shakespear, rejoice! his hand thy page refines:
And every scene with native brightness shines;
Just to thy fame, he gives thy genuine thought;
So Tully published what Lucretius wrote;
Pruned by his care, thy laurels loftier grow,
And bloom afresh on thy immortal brow."

Of Shakespeare, Broome presumably knew but little; of the proper manner of editing him he certainly knew nothing at all. This view of Pope's achievement had been prepared, though not published, before the appearance of 'Shakespeare Restored.' When that came out, the criticism contained in it had a tendency to make all such lines seem ridiculous. If Theobald's work accomplished nothing else, it put an end to all further enterprises in that particular field of eulogy.

Pope's sensitiveness was still further intensified by the universal acclaim with which Theobald's treatise had been received by every one interested in Shakespeare. The author's friends, as was natural, were never weary of celebrating its merits. Their utterances had been reinforced by the voices of men who, having no hostility to Pope, indeed being admirers of his writings, had yet been led by this review of the subject to entertain a poor opinion both of his critical skill and of his industry as an editor. But to these two classes were added those — and they were no small number — who were envious of the poet and of the position he had attained. Many of them cared little for Shakespeare, still less for Theobald, but they hated Pope. The unconcealed joy displayed by his enemies, and by those whom he chose to regard as his enemies, gave increased

strength to the hostility which it was peculiarly characteristic of his nature to feel toward the man who had brought upon him this unexpected humiliation. No depreciation which his writings had up to this time received, no attacks made upon his conduct, no abuse of his person inflicted upon him mortification so keen as that which he underwent from a work which, however severe, was characterized by no malice and had not in it one word of calumny.

It was its justice which made it intolerable. There was no escape from its quiet but relentless exposure of the carelessness he had displayed and of the blunders he had committed. In the numerous quarrels with which Pope's life was diversified, nothing — with perhaps the single exception of Cibber's Letter of 1742 — so irritated and incensed him as the publication of 'Shakespeare Restored.' He took the course which those familiar with his character and career would naturally expect. The man who had been the instrument of making him feel his inferiority was followed by him for years with an activity that never slept and a malignity that never tired. So thoroughly did he acquit himself of the task he set out to perform, so carefully did he cover his steps, that up to the present day nearly all his perversions of fact and of statement have been accepted with not even so much as a suggestion as to their possible untrustworthiness. Even those persons who have been unwearied in ferreting out the truth in regard to his tortuous course in the case of other men, have been content to receive without question and repeat without examination the numerous false charges he brought against Theobald.

At the time, however, he made no undue haste to begin hostilities. In truth it was two years after the publication of 'Shakespeare Restored' before he took any public notice of the criticism which his edition of the dramatist had received. None the less did he brood over it constantly, none the less was he preparing to exact ample vengeance for the censure his work had undergone. In June, 1727, more than a year after the appearance of Theobald's treatise, came out two volumes of 'Miscellanies' under the avowed editorship of Pope and Swift. They contained, furthermore, pieces by Arbuthnot and Gay. To the first volume was prefixed an apologetic preface, signed by the two editors, but bearing the unmistakable ear-mark of Pope. To begin with, there was the affected depreciation of the work as a whole. The pieces contained in it, the stricter judgment of the authors would have suppressed had it been in their power. But by the indiscretion of friends copies had got abroad, sometimes mangled, sometimes with spurious additions, and rendered in other ways intolerably imperfect. Hence they were under the painful necessity of printing the things which had appeared, not as they had appeared, but exactly as they had been written. Contemporary comment at once declared that their contents as now printed did not vary at all from the way they read when originally published. No change in them worth mentioning could be discovered. Hence the assumed necessity of repairing the indiscretion of friends did not exist. If this be true, it may be the reason why the work did not at the time excite any special interest or attention.

All this was changed, however, when in March, 1728, came out another volume of 'Miscellanies,' having on its title-page "the last volume."[1] This contained matter which had previously been printed; but there were in it some things both in prose and verse which were new and which were designed to create the uproar, such as it was, which followed. One piece of poetry entitled 'Fragment of a Satire' was the celebrated attack upon Addison which had first appeared in print five years before. To it a number of additions concerning other writers were now made. Among these was an attack upon Theobald who was designated as "a word-catcher who lives on syllables." To him was also applied here the adjective "piddling"; and by the keenness and brilliancy of the lines reflecting upon him Pope fixed permanently this epithet upon his critic. This so-called 'Fragment' was afterward embodied with some modifications in the 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.' But the real firebrand thrown into the literary powder-magazine was the prose piece with which this third volume opened. No one doubts now that it was prepared with the intent of creating the explosion which followed. It was entitled 'Martínus Scriblérus on the Bathos, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry.' *Bathos*, in the sense here indicated, had apparently never hitherto been employed in English. It consequently appeared in Greek characters, but was regularly rendered by "the profund," a

[1] "This day is published 'Miscellanies,' The Last Volume. By the Rev. Dr. Swift, Alexander Pope, Esq.; etc., consisting of several copies of verses, most of them never before printed. To which is prefixed 'A Discourse on the Profund, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry." ('The Craftsman,' March 9, 1728.)

spelling designedly adopted to distinguish it from "the profound."

The two men against whom the attack in this treatise was mainly directed, were Sir Richard Blackmore and Ambrose Philips. The former, now nearing his grave, had incurred the bitter enmity of both Swift and Pope. Swift had been denounced by him for his 'Tale of a Tub.' For writing it, Blackmore had termed him an impious buffoon, "who in any Pagan or Popish nation would have received the punishment he deserved for offering indignity to the established religion of his country, instead of being rewarded, as had been his lot, with preferment." Upon Swift's fellow-editor the moralist had been, if anything, more severe. He attacked him as the author of an indecent travesty of the first Psalm. This, after having been handed about in manuscript, had got into print and was widely dispersed. Blackmore had declared that the godless writer had burlesqued the psalm in so obscene and profane a manner that perhaps no age had seen so insolent an affront offered with impunity to a country's religion. The authorship of the piece Pope frequently affected, but never ventured really to deny.[1] In a newspaper advertisement he had offered three guineas' reward for the discovery of the person who had sent it to the press. But his threats were laughed to scorn; for he was careful to keep silence when met not only with defiance, but with the assurance that whenever there

[1] It is noticeable that in the note to 'The Dunciad' (4to of 1729, Book 2, l. 256; modern editions, l. 268) attacking Blackmore, Pope notices this charge, but while trying to discredit it, does not deny it.

should be occasion for it, the production could and would be shown in his own handwriting. This and another poem, entitled 'The Worms,' cannot be found in editions of Pope's works: but he was constantly taunted during his life with their authorship, of which indeed there is no doubt.

Blackmore's denunciation of both the editors had been published about half a score of years previous to this time. But Pope had never forgotten the provocation. As a consequence, his assailant appeared in this treatise as "the father of the Bathos and indeed the true Homer of it." From his writings much the largest number of examples were taken. Ambrose Philips was the one who fell under the next heaviest censure. With him Pope had been on ill terms since the publication of the pastoral poems of each in 1709 in the same volume. He had never been able to get over the injury wrought to his feelings by the fact that men had been found to exhibit the bad taste of preferring the artificial productions of this sort manufactured by his rival to the diverse but equally artificial productions manufactured by himself. To all intents and purposes it was a quarrel about the value of the yield of wool that could be secured from the shearing of horned cattle. The bucolic emotions to which each poet had given vent bore as close a resemblance to the bleating of sheep as they did to the speech of shepherds. The admiration professed by many for the pastorals of Philips, and the preference accorded them over his own had furnished Pope previous occasion for satire. A new opportunity was now offered. Hence from these poems of his rival no small number of ex-

tracts illustrative of the bathos were taken. But the examples of it were by no means limited to these two authors. They were collected from several other poets of the time, and in some instances from men of eminence. Addison's 'Campaign' was largely drawn upon, and passages from anonymous pieces, some of them not impossibly written by Pope himself for the very purpose. Not even was Shakespeare spared. These criticisms might therefore have met with comparatively little resentment, had not a distinct personal attack been levelled in the sixth chapter against a large number of contemporary writers.

This sixth chapter was entitled "Of the several Kinds of Geniuses in the Profund and the Marks and Character of each." More than a score of authors, indicated by their initials, were classified under the names of various members of the animal creation. This Pope desired and expected to be followed by an outcry that would furnish in turn the needed pretext for the publication of the satire which, long contemplated, had now been brought substantially to completion. In this list Theobald appeared in two places as L. T. Once he was represented as belonging to the swallows, who are described as "authors that are eternally skimming and fluttering up and down, but all their agility is employed to catch flies." He appeared again among the eels, who are "obscure authors that wrap themselves up in their own mud, but are mighty nimble and pert." But besides the personal references in this chapter, certain examples of the art of sinking in poetry occurred elsewhere in the essay, taken from the play of 'Double

Falsehood,' which Pope ascribed to him, terming it in one place 'Double Distress.'[1]

The attack thus made upon the various authors was intended to lead to recriminations and replies. To some extent it did. When in the following May 'The Dunciad' made its appearance the author, under the guise of its publisher, gave as a reason for its production that for every week for the two preceding months the town had been persecuted with pamphlets, advertisements, letters and weekly essays, not only against the wit and writings, but against the character and person of Mr. Pope. This exaggerated statement has been accepted by all later writers as a true account of the situation. As a matter of fact the attacks upon the poet, compared with the provocation given, were exceedingly few. Not a single pamphlet was published. All the articles of any nature, whether in prose or verse, whether the briefest of paragraphs or the longest of letters, which appeared between the dates of the 'Essay on the Profund' and of 'The Dunciad,' were collected soon after into a single volume. They were just twenty in number. Of these it is perfectly clear that four either came directly from Pope himself or were instigated by him. He must have felt some disappointment that more of the men who had been satirized in his treatise on the bathos did not deem it worth while to take any notice of the production. Among the contemporary authors attacked were Blackmore, Defoe, Ducket, Aaron Hill, Ambrose Philips, Ward, and Welsted. From not one of these nor from several others not

[1] This play, in truth, rarely receives even now its exact title. It is almost invariably called 'The Double Falsehood.' Even in Lowndes it appears with the definite article prefixed.

here recorded came a reply in any form. In the list which Pope subsequently put forth of those who during the two months before the publication of 'The Dunciad' had made him an object of invective, it is noticeable that five only — Cooke, Dennis, Oldmixon, Theobald, and Moore-Smythe — had names answering to the initials which had been given. The last-named had indeed attributed to him a letter which was either written by Pope himself or in his interest.

It is characteristic of Pope that one of the victims in this treatise on the bathos was a man whom he called his friend, and whom indeed at the time he was loading with expressions of regard. This was his admirer and imitator, Broome. He from the beginning had shown himself willing to do almost anything and to say almost anything to secure the poet's friendship and praise. He had written the notes to the translation of the 'Iliad,' and for it had refused any compensation. He had further written the notes to the 'Odyssey,' he had translated eight of its books, and for both had received but little compensation. Having used him as his drudge, Pope had proceeded to make him his tool. At the conclusion of the notes he induced Broome to assign to him a large share of his own work, and inferentially to include that of Fenton. Instead of the twelve books of the 'Odyssey' which they had rendered into English, they appeared as having made a version of but five. The statement Pope confirmed by calling it "punctually just." But the betrayal of the truth did not bring to Broome the praise he craved and expected from the poet. He resented the neglect, nor did he take pains to keep silent about the

real facts. For this insubordination Pope put the initials of his name in the 'Essay on the Profund' with those of others. He furthermore gave from his poetry several specimens illustrative of the bathos. Broome prepared a private letter complaining of the ungenerous and ungrateful treatment which he had met from the man for whom he had done so much and from whom he had received so little. Before sending it he forwarded it to Fenton, and by Fenton was prevailed upon to preserve a silence which he confessed he would not have been able to keep himself. "He has challenged you to a public defence," wrote his friend, "and if you do not think it worth your while to take up the gauntlet, the sullen silence of Ajax will be the most manly revenge. Far be it from me to endeavor to spirit you up to the combat; but if it were my own case, I could not remain passive under such a provocation."[1] But Broome was not an Ajax, as Pope well knew, but only an amiable coward. His sullen silence accordingly served only to procure him later a place in 'The Dunciad.'

The treatment of Broome was typical of Pope's conduct when he felt that action of this sort could be taken with impunity. If one to whom he was under obligation could meet with such a return, what could he expect who had inflicted upon the poet the keenest mortification? Still, if Broome kept silent from fear, no motive of this nature influenced Theobald. Yet from him came nothing directly for the space of several weeks, and when it came it was a perfectly legitimate defence, not of himself, but

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 146, letter of April 7, 1728, from Fenton to Broome.

of the language of the play he had edited. Indirectly he may be said to have furnished at once a species of reply. It was, however, coincident with the publication of the last 'Miscellany' volume rather than a consequent of it. That work had appeared in the first half of March. About the middle of the same month 'Mist's Journal'[1] printed a communication which inclosed a private letter of Theobald's to a friend. The letter was essentially a continuation of the criticism which had already appeared in 'Shakespeare Restored.' This the correspondent who sent it professed to have forwarded for publication without leave obtained. The assertion was pretty certainly one of those amiable fictions which have the semblance of mendacity without its substance. False statements of this sort partake rather of the nature of intellectual exercises than of moral offences: for they never deceive nor are they expected to deceive anybody.

This letter of Theobald's contained three emendations of the text of Shakespeare and the clearing up of a wrongly explained reference. All of these were of a kind to arrest the attention of students of the dramatist. One of them introduced a slight alteration in the speech of Prospero to Ferdinand, when he bestows upon him the hand of Miranda. In it he tells him, in the text up to this time received, that he had given him "a third" of his own life. Theobald changed 'third' to 'thread.' About the advisability of this alteration, opinion has been divided from the beginning. Some editors accept it, others follow the original. But no such diversity of opinion has befallen the next two. They have been sub-

[1] No. 152, March 16, 1728.

stantially adopted in all editions since the time of their first appearance. One of these gives a further illustration of that conjectural sagacity which Theobald had already exhibited and was later to exhibit still more fully. It is concerned with the scene in which a senator of Athens is represented as sending his servant to Timon with a demand for the repayment of money borrowed. He dismisses him with the following injunction, as the passage appears in the original:

"Take the bonds along with you
And have the dates in. Come."[1]

As dates are never a later insertion in bonds, Theobald changed the last line so as to read

"And have the dates in compt."

and this is the way the passage reads in modern editions.

The remaining correction as well as its explanation was due rather to superior knowledge than to superior acumen. In the play of 'Coriolanus' Lartius sums up the hero's character by observing

"Thou wast a soldier,
Even to Calvus wish."[2]

So read the editions of Rowe and Pope; it was their correction of the 'Calves' of the folios. But who was Calvus? What was his idea of a soldier, and where was it to be found? No one knew. Theobald really did what Pope made a pretence to do, that is, he consulted carefully Shakespeare's originals. In consequence he pointed out that it must be Cato who was here meant, and not any one by the name of Calvus. The former it was

[1] Timon, act ii., scene 1.

[2] Act i., scene 4.

who was described in Plutarch's life of Coriolanus as having given utterance to the views of the soldier which were here expressed. Of course this involved an anachronism; for the hero of the play lived two centuries and a half before Cato, to whom the sentiments were attributed. But anachronism is a literary crime about which few great poets trouble themselves much; and great early poets not at all. Pope, while he was compelled to admit the justice of the emendation, pretended to be pained by the discovery. It cast a discredit upon Shakespeare, which he seemed to think would never have fallen upon him, had it not been for Theobald. "A terrible anachronism," he wrote, "which might have lain hid but for this Restorer."[1] It was easy to retort — Theobald did not fail to take advantage of it — that in this same play occurred other anachronisms which had not harrowed the feelings of the editor. Alexander the Great and Galen had been mentioned. The one flourished two centuries after Coriolanus, the other six.

The emendation just given is one which might have occurred to any classical scholar of the time. Such, however, is not the case with the following passage from 'Troilus and Cressida.' In the course of the speech in which Agamemnon recounts to Diomed the reverses of the Greeks, he says among other things,

> "The dreadful Sagittary
> Appals our numbers."

Sc. V. l. 14.

Pope considered that the Trojan archer, Teucer, was the person here meant. But Theobald knew, what few

[1] Pope's Shakespeare, 2d ed., end of vol. viii., under 'Various Readings, Guesses, etc.'

men of his time did, that Shakespeare had founded his play of 'Troilus and Cressida' upon the mediæval version of the tale of Troy and not upon the Homeric. He pointed out that the source of this speech was to be found in an old chronicle originally printed by Caxton and subsequently by Wynkin de Worde. It contained an account of the three destructions of Troy. From it he cited the passage describing the "mervayllouse beste that was called Sagittarye, that behynde the myddes was an horse, and to fore a man; this beeste was heery like an horse and had his eyen rede as a cole, and shotte well with a bowe: this beste made the Grekes sore afrede, and slew many of them with his bowe." No one now questions the correctness of this explanation; few indeed there were who did so then. But Pope continued to remain faithful to his Teucer. To original lack of knowledge he added obstinate persistence in error. The reference to the undoubted original was the immediate cause of his speaking in 'The Dunciad' of Theobald as stuffing his brain

> "With all such reading as was never read." [1]

In the note to another line of this same work he spoke contemptuously of the beast called Sagittary which Theobald "would have Shakespear to mean rather than Teucer, the archer celebrated by Homer." [2]

These are specimens of emendations which in Pope's

[1] Dunciad, quarto of 1729, Book 1, l. 166. In the recast of 1743 it became line 250 of Book 4, as in modern editions, and was made to refer to Bentley. The original note upon it was necessarily dropped.

[2] Quarto of 1729, Book 1, l. 129; in modern editions l. 149. This note also disappeared in the recast of 1743.

eyes were piddling, and of explanations which he professed to deem unsatisfactory. Not so did they strike Theobald's contemporaries. They did not impress the men of that time as being of the nature of fly-catching practised by swallows or as displaying the characteristics of eels who wrap themselves in mud. Theobald was not only encouraged but entreated to go on with the work he had undertaken. Respect for his ability was still further increased by the only article — at least the only article under his own name — which took any notice of the reflections cast by Pope upon himself in his treatise of the Bathos. It was in the shape of a communication to 'Mist's Journal' and appeared on April 27. This letter, had his opponent been on the same level of repute as himself, would never have met with anything but unqualified commendation. It is dignified in tone throughout. There is in it no abuse of his assailant, nor any exhibition of undue sensitiveness to the attack which had been directed against himself personally. He said very justly that in exposing the defects of Pope's edition he had endeavored to treat its editor with all the deference that the circumstances would permit. To deference indeed he added tenderness. This latter is not so apparent to the modern reader. "But to set anything right," he continued, "after Mr. Pope had adjusted the whole, was a presumption not to be forgiven." For so doing he had been subjected to personal attack. To this he intended to make no reply; and there is no evidence that he ever did.

Theobald felt called upon, however, to defend the

three passages from the play of 'Double Falsehood' which had been cited as specimens of bathos. He had no difficulty in pointing out places in Shakespeare liable to censure for precisely similar faults, if faults they were. Only one of these three is of any interest now, and that is due simply to the fact that it contains a line which in consequence of Pope's ridicule became early a stock quotation and has remained so to this day. It is the last verse of the following passage:

> "Is there a treachery like this in baseness
> Recorded anywhere? It is the deepest:
> None but itself can be its parallel."

This line Pope cited in the form in which it is now generally known,—

> "None but himself can be his parallel,—"

and declared that it was profundity itself,—"unless," he continued, "it may seem borrowed from the thought of that master of a show in Smithfield who writ in large letters over the picture of his elephant,

> "'This is the greatest elephant in the world, except himself.'" [1]

Theobald's reply to this sally is a good illustration both of the extent of his reading and of the acumen which he had brought and was still to bring to the task of editing Shakespeare. "Literally speaking, indeed," he wrote, "I agree with Mr. Pope that nothing can be parallel to itself; but allowing a little for the liberty of expression, does it not plainly imply that it is a treachery which stands single for the nature of its

[1] Treatise on the Bathos, ch. vii.

baseness, and has not its parallel on record, and that nothing but treachery equal to this in baseness can equal it?" He did not content, himself, however, with argument. He proceeded to point out in Plautus a piece of nonsense, if it were nonsense, of precisely the same stamp. It may be added that later in his edition of Shakespeare he cited further examples from the classic authors to keep the phrase in countenance. They were taken from Ovid, Terence, and Seneca.[1]

It is worth while to remark that one of the examples he gave — that from the *Hercules Furens* of Seneca — was subsequently rediscovered several times by later writers and announced with exceeding flourish of trumpets. In 1780 a correspondent of the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' who wrote under the signature of Æneanasensis, informed the world that this celebrated line with its palpable absurdity had after all only the secondary merit of being a literal translation.[2] Nearly a score of years later Joseph Warton made the same notable discovery. He duly recorded it with the usual remarks and the usual self-glorification. "It is a little remarkable," he wrote, "that this line of Theobald, which is thought to be a masterpiece of absurdity, is evidently copied from a line of Seneca in the *Hercules Furens*."[3] A controversy arose at once as to the priority in pointing out the original of this verse. The claims of Æneanasensis — who

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iv. p. 187. The passage from Seneca reads as follows:

"Quæris Alcidæ parem?
Nemo est, nisi ipse."

[2] Gentleman's Magazine, November, 1780, vol. l. p. 507.

[3] Warton's Pope, vol. vi. p. 220.

turned out to be the Reverend Mr. Kynaston [1] — were vigorously set forth. It was a characteristic of the ill fortune which waited upon Theobald's later reputation that men continued to quarrel over the question as to who was the first to discover something which he had discovered and publicly announced more than half a century before.

But Theobald in the defence of the passage did not confine himself to the ancients. As in the case of the other passages attacked, he resorted to modern writers also and in particular to Shakespeare. He showed conclusively that this particular line selected for animadversion was not different in character from several others to be found in the greatest of English dramatists. These he quoted. The citations drove Pope into a corner out of which he was not able to get. He was so staggered by the examples given — one of which he did not discover till later was a mistaken one — that he was forced to take the ground that Shakespeare was as bad as Theobald himself. In the third book of 'The Dunciad' we find the line quoted again by him, though with a slight variation, in the form,

"None but thyself can be thy parallel."

"A marvellous line of Theobald," ran the note upon it, "unless the play called the 'Double Falsehood' be (as he would have it believed) Shakespear's. But whether the line be his or not, he proves Shakespear to have written as bad." [2]

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 729.

[2] Book 3, l. 272, quarto of 1729. Neither line nor note is in editions of 'The Dunciad,' from 1743 on.

The controversial discussion which went on about this point furnishes a choice number of examples of that common critical imbecility which contents itself with adopting without reflection the likes and dislikes of a great author. For writing this unlucky line, as it was termed — his authorship of it was invariably assumed — Theobald was subjected to constant attack during the whole of the eighteenth century. As Englishmen, however, began to study with more care their own literature, to say nothing of the literature of other lands, they found precisely similar expressions in well-known authors of every age and class. In truth this particular comparison was so frequent with the Elizabethan dramatists that its appearance in 'Double Falsehood' is evidence, so far as it goes, that the play belongs to the period to which it had been assigned. Gifford had a note implying this view, upon the following passage in Massinger's 'Duke of Milan':

> "Her goodness does disdain comparison,
> And, but herself, admits no parallel." [1]

To attack the phrase upon the score of impropriety struck him as a lack of sense, and on the score of unusualness as a lack of knowledge. It was so common, he declared, that were it necessary, he could produce twenty instances from Massinger's contemporaries alone. Further, it was not peculiar to English literature. It could be found in every language with which he was acquainted. Yet, he added, Theobald, "who had everything but wit on his side, is at this

[1] Act iv., scene 3.

moment laboring under the consequences of his imagined defeat." [1]

But in his letter Theobald did not limit himself to the defensive. He incidentally brought in an emendation of Shakespeare which is adopted in most modern editions. It is worth recording here as an illustration of how in many instances the sense of a passage can be completely changed by a slight change in the punctuation. To set right commas and points, it was the fashion with Pope and his friends to sneer at and depreciate as something altogether trivial. How trivial it is, the example itself shows, whether we accept it or reject it. In 'The Merchant of Venice,' a part of Gratiano's speech to Bassanio, after the choice of the caskets has been made, ran as follows in Pope's edition:

> "My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours:
> You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid:
> You lov'd: I lov'd for intermission.
> No more pertains to me, my lord, than you." [2]

Pope had substantially followed the reading found in the fourth folio and adopted from it by Rowe. Theobald declared that he could not understand the text so printed; and while certain modern editors have succeeded in explaining it to their own satisfaction they have rarely done so to the satisfaction of anybody else. The one they give he, however, explicitly rejected. "Surely," he wrote, "he" (that is, Pope) "will hardly persuade us that *intermission* here means 'for want of something else to do, because he would not stand idle.'"

[1] Gifford's Massinger, vol. i. p. 312.

[2] Act iii., scene 2.

Theobald set out to make the passage clear, as he understood it, by pointing the last two lines in the following manner:

> "You lov'd; I lov'd: (for intermission
> No more pertains to me, my lord, than you)."

Later in his edition he justified the employment of *intermission* in the sense of "a pause or discontinuance of action" by other examples from Shakespeare.

The concluding paragraph of this letter contained the promise of a second criticism of the second edition of Pope's Shakespeare which was expected to be brought out in the course of the year. The consideration of what was said in it will come up later. There will then be occasion to observe how well the poet remembered and resented it, and how heedful he was to misrepresent and garble and manipulate it so as to hold its author responsible for words he never wrote and opinions he never expressed. This communication to 'Mist's Journal' is Theobald's only reply, so far as we know, to the attack made upon him in the 'Miscellanies' before the publication of 'The Dunciad.' But shortly after this third volume of the former work had come out, there had appeared in this same paper an anonymous article on its opening treatise. It was entitled 'An Essay on the Arts of a Poet's Sinking in Reputation,' being a Supplement to the 'Art of Sinking in Poetry.'[1] It wounded Pope deeply. There were things said in it

[1] Mist's Journal, March 30, 1728. This article must not be confounded with the pamphlet which came out later, — in August, 1728, — entitled 'A Supplement to the Profund,' and attributed by Pope to Concanen.

which rankled in his breast for years. In its way indeed it was a masterpiece of mean insinuation. There were brought together in it all the charges against the poet's character and conduct which had been for years floating about in literary and social circles, besides those which had already found their way into print. Not only was there concentrated in it everything which could annoy and irritate, there ran through it a vein of cool contempt, which to a man of Pope's sensitive nature must have been almost as galling as the charges themselves.

There is no question that the article gave expression to opinions about the poet which had become widely prevalent. It was certainly appreciated and enjoyed by some who were generally reckoned among his friends. One of his old associates in the translation of the 'Odyssey,' bore witness to the accuracy of its delineation of his character. "Mist," wrote Fenton to Broome, "had a very severe paper against him in the last journal, . . . [written by one who has studied and understands him." [1] Certainly, nothing calculated to injure him in the estimation of the public was overlooked. The poet who sets out to sink in his reputation, it was asserted, must make it a point to publish such authors as he has least studied and are most likely to miscarry under his hands. He must in revising forget to discharge the dull duty of an editor, and make it impossible to determine whether his errors are due to ignorance or to rapidity of execution. He must lend his name for a good sum of money to promote the discredit of an exorbitant

[1] Fenton to Broome, April 3, 1728, Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 143.

subscription. He must misapprehend the meaning of passages in Greek which he has sought to turn into English. On the other hand, in his own tongue he must wrest the language of others from their natural meaning in order to serve his own purposes. He must undertake a book in his own name by subscription and get a great part of it done by assistants. He must devote himself to getting off on the public three new miscellany volumes of old and second-hand wares: for gain is the principal end of his art, and it will further furnish him an opportunity of indulging any lurking spleen which he feels. He must make it an indispensable rule to sacrifice to his "profund wit" his friend, his modesty, his God, or any other transitory regards, in the frequent compositions he puts forth in the three different styles of the vituperative, the prurient, and the atheistical. Much more there was of the same sort.

Pope chose to ascribe to Theobald the authorship of this little but venomous essay. In his list of articles published against himself he so registered it, though he put it down there as "supposed" to be by him. To this belief in its origin he certainly clung for years, if not always. The charge of having lent his name for money for the benefit of an exorbitant subscription was the one which irritated him especially. He cited it among the 'Testimonies of Authors,' prefixed to 'The Dunciad,' as having been made in this article by one "whom," he said, "I take to be Mr. Theobald." Three years after, we find him expressing his resentment about it and still imputing definitely to the same person the circulation of the story, if not its invention. In Novem-

ber, 1731, with this very matter in mind, he wrote to Tonson that he had suffered not a little on that publisher's account, by one lie of Theobald's venting.[1] No positive evidence can be secured either for or against this ascription of the authorship. If Theobald were really the writer of the essay, he would have exhibited a capacity for flinging dirt which Pope himself might have envied. On the surface the view is not reasonable. It displays none of the characteristics of his ordinary style. Theobald had ability of a certain sort; but it was not the sort of ability here manifested. It did not lie in insinuative vituperation. But, whether written by him or not, Pope chose to hold him responsible for it; and the cleverness as well as the malevolence of the attack, while furnishing the most palpable proof that its author had the least possible right to be reckoned a dunce, would, nevertheless, still further stimulate the angry poet to make the man to whom he attributed it occupy the most prominent position in his forthcoming satire.

For all this time, Pope had been forging a thunderbolt which he purposed to launch upon all his foes; and, in his eyes, all were foes who did not assent to the opinion of his character and genius which he assumed for himself. The conception had been for a long while in his mind. Whether or not it was desirable or feasible to carry it into execution, he had been uncertain. The project had been taken up occasionally only to be laid aside. But the needed incentive had been furnished in the damaging criticism which had demolished his pre-

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. ix. p. 551, letter of November 14, 1731.

tensions as an editor. In its author he had found at last his hero. Accordingly, the time had now arrived to put into effect his long delayed intention. Not all his plans indeed had succeeded. But few of the men whose initials had been given in the treatise on the Bathos had been induced to make any retort. Still, there was enough of clamor, even if contributed mainly by the irresponsible and the unassailed, to furnish him with what might be deemed sufficient justification for the next step he was about to take; for, as it has already been intimated, it was not a reason for his course that he was after, but a pretext. Accordingly, on the 18th of May, 1728, appeared 'The Dunciad' in its original form, and with Theobald as its original hero. The frontispiece represented an owl perched upon a pile of books by various authors; and among these was conspicuously visible the title of 'Shakespeare Restored.'

CHAPTER XII

THE ORIGINAL 'DUNCIAD'

'THE Dunciad' in its original form is the greatest satire in the English language. It suffers, as does all satire of even the highest order, from the fact that the individuals and incidents that excite the real or assumed indignation of the author become dim even to the men of the generation immediately succeeding, and with the lapse of time often fade away entirely. The persons are not known, the allusions are not understood. The point of keen and delicate thrusts is largely and sometimes wholly missed. Still 'The Dunciad,' in spite of the vast number of names it records, has been but little affected by the ignorance of the age and the men which has come to prevail. The satire in it against individuals is often so general that what has been said of one would do equally well for another. In fact, at the very time it did equally well. There is nothing more characteristic of the poem than the extent to which the names were dropped, resumed, exchanged, and substituted for one another in successive editions. The attack apparently so personal became, in consequence, as impersonal as if a fictitious designation had been employed. But far more than this, there were in the work passages of brilliant

poetry which lifted it out of the region of the particular into that of the universal.

This is all true of 'The Dunciad' in its original form. It is altogether less true of it as we find it in modern editions. The changes necessitated by the recast of the poem have largely impaired its excellence as a work of art. What was originally the leading motive has become a subject of merely incidental allusion. The substitution of Cibber for Theobald as its hero utterly destroyed the unity of the poem, involved the rejection or misapplication of some of its wittiest lines, and rendered pointless much of its keenest satire. The recast which owed its origin to an ebullition of personal anger and the keen suffering caused the poet by a most effective rejoinder to an attack of his own, has been defended by the poorest kind of inconclusive reasoning. The result itself has shown the folly of the action taken. The change of heroes is the main reason why 'The Dunciad' is now so little read, and with so much difficulty understood. It has lost all the interest which it originally had as the greatest literary production to which Shakespearean controversy has given birth. This interest would have gone on increasingly with the constantly increasing attention paid later to everything connected with the life and works of the dramatist. Furthermore the change was absurd in itself. Whatever were Colley Cibber's defects, they were not in the least those belonging to a dunce of any sort, still less — if the expression be permitted — of the sort of dunce which Pope set out to depict. The labored sophistry put forth by partisans of Pope to defend this unhappy change have had little other result

than to lead the reader to believe that they are unconsciously justifying their own pretensions to be included in a work of the same character.

'The Dunciad,' however, was far from being directed against Theobald alone. In it Pope expended upon every one he hated or distrusted the stores of wrath which he had been accumulating since his first production had appeared, about twenty years before. All who had ever found fault or were suspected of having found fault with his writings or his character were comprehended under the general name of Dunces. No one was too insignificant to escape; no one too exalted not to be alluded to if not to be struck at directly. While, therefore, the satire was mainly directed — especially the first book — against Theobald and his method of editing, the controversy about Shakespeare became involved with the innumerable other quarrels in which Pope had been and still was concerned. It is impossible to disentangle it from these, with which it was united and into which it was not infrequently merged. Hence a fuller treatment of 'The Dunciad' becomes necessary than the particular controversy itself would here demand. It is the more important to furnish a complete history of the circumstances under which the original editions appeared, because 'The Dunciad,' as a Shakespearean document can hardly be said to be known now. It has practically passed away not merely from the memory, but from the sight of men.

The 'Dunciad' which holds so conspicuous a place in early Shakespearean controversy has not been in existence since 1743. Its place was then taken by another

work bearing the same name, including most of the same matter, but so modified in details, so shorn of certain of its previous characteristics, that no one could now get from it a conception of the feelings and motives which originally brought it into being. In its very earliest form it has occasionally been reprinted in editions of Pope purporting to be complete. In the fuller and more important form found in the editions of 1729 much of it has never been reprinted at all save in the most fragmentary way. The original notes have in a number of cases disappeared with the lines to which they were alone applicable. Several of those aimed especially at Theobald, and designed to satirize his method of dealing with the text of Shakespeare, were necessarily swept away when Cibber was made hero in his place. The consequence is that the attack and defence to which the work gave rise as well as the causes to which it owed its own existence, are no longer comprehensible to him who reads its contents in modern copies of the poem. Very few are familiar with the varying forms it underwent in successive editions. It is indeed in only a very limited number of the great libraries of the world that they would find the facilities for making themselves so. There is consequently not only ample excuse but absolute necessity for going into the subject with a degree of detail which would be unjustifiable were the materials upon which the conclusions are based generally accessible to students of Shakespeare.

The facts connected with the first appearance of this satire shall be given as concisely as is consistent with any clear understanding of the circumstances which are

to be narrated. The fundamental distinction between the work in its original and in its present form must be kept steadily in view. 'The Dunciad,' as the modern reader finds it, is a poem in four books, with Colley Cibber as its hero, and Theobald only incidentally attacked. As a factor in Shakespearean controversy it is a poem in three books with Lewis Theobald as its hero, and Cibber incidentally attacked. In its very earliest form it came out shortly after the middle of May, 1728, in a small duodecimo volume. No name was on the title-page except that of the publisher, A. Dodd. This was a bookseller whose place of business is put down in other volumes in which he or she was concerned as "without Temple Bar." The frontispiece represented an owl holding in his beak a label having on it the words "The Dunciad," and perched upon a pile of books. This was built up of the works of contemporary authors — Blackmore, Ozell, Dennis, and Cibber, as well as Theobald — whom Pope despised or affected to despise. The volume also contained on the title-page "Dublin printed; London reprinted," and the date, 1728. It had been and it continued to be advertised in the newspapers as the second edition;[1] in the book itself this particular misstatement was implied, but not asserted. Further, special notice was given that the

[1] *E. g:* "This day is published The Dunciad. An heroic Poem. The second edition. Dublin printed; London, reprinted for A. Dodd. Price one shilling."

"*N. B.* Next week will be published, The Progress of Dulness, By an eminent hand." ('The Country Journal: or The Craftsman,' Saturday, May 25, 1728, No. 99.)

Pope, in a letter to Lord Oxford, dated May 20, speaks of the work being out, but says that he had not seen it. Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 235.

next week would be published 'The Progress of Dulness' by an eminent hand. This announcement of a work not in existence and never contemplated was a further mystification which was kept up still later. It appeared on the verso of the last leaf of some of the editions of 1728.

The words "Dublin printed," were designed to create the belief that the work had been first published in Ireland. An additional motive was to convey the impression that some one there — presumably Swift — was its author or had at least some share in its production. To strengthen this view the dedication to him under the various names of "Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver," which had been prepared, was for the time being suppressed. The belief that he was its writer would further spring naturally from the assertion contained in the publisher's preface that the unknown author had a better opinion of Pope's integrity, joined with a greater personal love for him than any other of his numerous friends and admirers. When the following year Pope brought out 'The Dunciad' in its full form, he pretended that the preface was throughout a piece of continued irony; and that two days after the appearance of the satire, every one knew that he himself was its author. This particular portion of the prefatory matter belongs to that species of irony which needs notes and commentaries to explain its intent. Certainly its statements wrought at the time the desired effect of misleading the public. Swift was for a while widely supposed to have had something to do with the preparation of the satire, even if he were not its actual writer. "Fierce is the present war among

authors," was an observation made in a work which appeared almost contemporaneously with 'The Dunciad.' "Swift," it added, "had mauled Theobald, but Theobald had mauled Pope."[1] Communication in those days between the two capitals was slow and unsatisfactory. A mystification of the kind here practised could now be dispelled in a day. Then it took weeks and even months to clear it up, if it were ever cleared up at all.

The statement that the book was a reprint led also to the conclusion that it had not only been brought out originally in Dublin, but that it had been brought out the year before. This came necessarily into conflict with Pope's assertion that it owed its existence to the clamor which had been aroused by the contents of the final volume of the 'Miscellanies.' Still, this deception as regards the time of the first appearance of 'The Dunciad' was never abandoned. On the contrary, it was upheld and strengthened. In later editions "written in the year 1727" appeared pretty regularly on the title-page. This is one of the class of truths which confer and are intended to confer upon their utterers the benefit of a lie. Part of the work — certainly nearly all the first book relating to Theobald — must have been written in 1727. To this extent full tribute was rendered to veracity. But the reader would be sure to draw the conclusion from these unusual words on a title-page that "written in the year 1727" meant also that it had been published that year. The deception was carried further. In later editions — in some indeed

[1] The Twickenham Hotchpotch, p. 4.

which have "written in the year 1727" on the title-page — a note in the body of the work tells us that it was written in 1726 and published the following year. As there was no London edition of this date, a Dublin one which never had a being was long the despair of bibliographers. The falsification was never cleared up till the latter half of the nineteenth century.

'The Dunciad' in its first form contained but few notes. These, save once or twice where they touched upon Theobald, were of a purely explanatory character. The names of the numerous living persons referred to in the poem were very rarely printed in full. Instead, either the initial and final letters were given or the initial letter only. The hero, of course, was an exception. He invariably appeared as Tibbald. Where nothing but the initial letter was found, the person intended could only be guessed at, unless he appeared at the end of the line. Then the ryme would ordinarily indicate who was meant. The identification, easy in some instances, was, however, difficult in others. The uncertainty gave opportunity for wide conjecture. As some of the authors were hardly known at all outside of their immediate circle, as some of the incidents referred to were even less known, as some of the scandal suggested rather than asserted could hardly be said to be known at all, it was inevitable that public curiosity should be much piqued and that mistakes should be occasionally made.

Blunders were committed when even the first and last letters of the name were given. A gross one occurred in the Dublin reprint of the original which came out

the same year. In one line of the first book the goddess of Dulness is represented as having seen "furious D——n foam." [1] A Key which soon appeared explained this as meaning the somewhat noted publisher, Dunton, whom Pope subsequently described in a note as "a broken bookseller and abusive scribbler." [2] But in this Dublin edition of 1728 the name, there printed in full, appeared as Dryden. A blunder of this sort, however agreeable to Swift, could hardly have been anything but vexatious to Pope. Yet it is a remarkable illustration of the reputation which the poet's tortuous course has secured him in modern times that he has been suspected of deliberately contriving such a possible interpretation of the initial and final letters. As the inclusion of the great name of Dryden would have utterly destroyed the force of his attack upon other authors, there seems little reason to doubt the sincerity of the annoyance he expressed at the blunder. Still, in one way it did him good service. It gave him an additional pretext for denouncing these early editions as surreptitious and incorrect.

If doubt as to the proper identification could prevail at the capital, it would be sure to exist on a much greater scale the moment the book reached places distant from London. By readers in them, no possible clue could be found in many instances which would enable them to fill up the blank spaces with the letters necessary to indicate the name. Hence a clamor at once arose for a Key which would supply the needed informa-

[1] Dunciad, 1728, Book 1, l. 94.

[2] Note to line 136, Book 2, quarto of 1729; line 144 in modern editions.

tion. The demand must surely have been foreseen. At all events, a little sheet of four pages, made speedily its appearance, containing the names in full of the persons whose initial or initial and final letters had been given. The chances are that this key either owed its existence to Pope's instigation or was brought out with his connivance. It was exactly of the same size as the duodecimo page and could easily be bound up with it. Even had he not furnished it himself, he could not but have been aware that there was one man who could be relied upon to produce something of the sort. This was the indefatigable Curll. Scarcely had the satire appeared when that publisher advertised a Key.[1] From his house came successive editions of it which were made to correspond with the successive changes of name in the text.

The poem itself was ushered in with a sort of preface written really by the author, but purporting to come from the publisher. It was exceedingly laudatory of Pope, and of its perfect sincerity in this particular, there is naturally no question. Otherwise it abounded in equivocal phraseology capable of being interpreted in various ways, as well as in unmistakably contemptuous allusions to the men who were made the objects of attack. It started out with the assertion that if any scandal was vented against a person of high distinction in the state or in literature, it usually met with a quiet reception. On the other hand, if a known scoundrel or blockhead

[1] "I see Curll has advertised a Key to the Dunciad. I have been asked for one by several; I wish the true one was come out." (Lord Oxford to Pope, in letter dated May 27, 1728, Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 236.)

chanced to be touched upon, a whole legion of scribblers were at once up in arms. This condition of things had just been illustrated. For the past two months the town had been persecuted with pamphlets, advertisements, letters, and weekly essays, not only against the writings of Mr. Pope, but against his character and person. This statement was, as we have seen, an exaggeration at the time itself; later it was converted into a gross exaggeration. The actual facts and the order of events naturally soon became dim in men's memory; and the editions which appeared in the following decade contained a series of statements which were not only contradictory to the actual facts, but to some extent contradictory to each other. In them, in a note to the original preface, which had been relegated to the appendix, Pope remarked that in his treatise on the Bathos the species of bad writers had been arranged in classes, and initial letters of names prefixed for the most part at random. But the number of these men was so great that some one or other of them took every letter to himself. Consequently all of them fell into a violent fury, and for a half a year or more the common newspapers — in most of which they had some property as being hired writers — were filled with the most abusive falsehood and scurrility they could possibly devise. This was what had led to the publication of 'The Dunciad.' Accordingly, the two months which had elapsed between the 'Miscellanies' and the satire had been extended to more than six. The score of articles, long or short, that had appeared, and for some of which the poet was responsible himself, had been swelled into a number indefinitely

large. Furthermore, a work which according to the title-page or notes was written in 1727 had been occasioned by scurrilities and falsehoods that were not produced till 1728.

Against these virulent attacks the preface went on to say that there had been no reply. Of the men who had received pleasure from Pope's writings — amounting by modest computation to more than one hundred thousand in the British islands, besides those dwelling in regions outside — not a single person had been forward to stand up in his defence, save the author of this satire. That he was an intimate friend of the poet, though plainly not the poet himself, was clear. Not a man had been attacked in it who had not previously begun the warfare. Further, how the publisher came to get hold of the work was a matter of no consequence. Having, however, come into the possession of it, he felt that it was wrong to detain it from the public, because the names which were its chief ornaments were daily dying off — dying off in truth so fast that delay would soon render the poem unintelligible. He would not, however, have the reader too anxious to decipher from the initials used the persons indicated. Even after he had found them out, he would probably know no more of them than before. Still, it was better to present them in the form in which they appeared rather than give fictitious names. Such a course would only multiply the scandal. Were the hero to be designated by some such appellation as Codrus it would have been applied to several persons instead of being limited to one. All this unjust detraction was obviated by calling him Theobald,

which by good luck happened to be the name of a real person.

The foregoing are the parts of the preface which have any interest for us here. Its whole character had been determined by the change of plan which had taken place. The satire had not come out in the manner at first contemplated. Not even was the name preserved which had been given it when the poet had planned its creation. As originally conceived, it had been the intention to call it 'The Progress of Dulness,' and the matter contained in its third book answered pretty accurately to the title. But when the design had been largely modified, when by the numerous additions and the introduction of a hero personalities instead of generalities had become the main instead of the subsidiary staple of the satire, the poet's natural timidity made him hold back for a while from carrying out in its completeness the scheme he had devised. Accordingly, in the first edition practically everything but the text was shorn away. Not only was nothing said to establish decisively the authorship, but the very advertisement that the satire was speedily to be followed by a poem entitled 'The Progress of Dulness' and written by an eminent hand, would tend to divert from Pope the suspicion of having been the writer of the one which preceded it.

That the poet himself was soon to bring out a work with the designation just given, had got more or less abroad. An article in a contemporary newspaper asserted this distinctly. It was transmitted by a correspondent who signed himself A. B., and was attributed

by Pope to Dennis. This ascription of the authorship is probably correct, for it exhibits some choice characteristics of that master-critic's vigorous vituperation. After attacking Pope's writings generally, and specifically his treatise on the Bathos, he closed with a paragraph referring to the forthcoming work and its author. "Yet, notwithstanding his ignorance and stupidity," remarked the writer, "this animalculum of an author is, forsooth! at this very juncture writing the Progress of Dulness. Yes! the author of Windsor Forest, of the Temple of Fame, of the What d'ye Call it; nay, the author even of the Profund is writing the Progress of Dulness! A most vain and impertinent enterprise! For they who have read his several pieces which we mentioned above, have read the Progress of Dulness; a progress that began in Windsor Forest, and ended in the Profund; as the short progress of the devil's hogs ended in the depth of the sea." [1]

This small duodecimo of 1728, without author's name and practically without commentary, was consequently put forth as a feeler. If it failed, the course he had adopted put Pope in a position to disown it; if it succeeded he could reap all the benefit and would be encouraged to go on and bring out the complete edition he had in mind and largely in readiness. This intention had been distinctly hinted in the preface. "If it provoke the author," said the theoretical publisher, "to give us a more perfect edition, I have my end." As it turned out, as indeed it might confidently have been expected to turn out, the precaution was wholly un-

[1] Daily Journal, May 11, 1728.

necessary. The reception the work met showed Pope that he had nothing to fear from the indifference of the public. The town, to use the phrase then current, had never before seen served up for its delectation such a mess of scandal, spite, misrepresentation, malice, and all uncharitableness, couched in brilliant verse, abounding in pointed lines and containing passages of rare beauty. The personalities tickled the most jaded appetite for invective and abuse. Of themselves, they would have averted failure even had the wit been less. Nor, further, had there been neglect to appeal to the innate nastiness of human nature by descriptions which it was disgraceful to write and which still remain disgusting to read.

All doubt about the complete success of the work was at once removed. On every side it produced comment, inquiry, indignation. Every one interested in literature was eager to read it. Every one who had even the humblest share in producing literature was eager to see if he were in it, to rejoice if he were not, to condole — though doubtless, after the manner of men, secretly amused — with friends who had been included in its wide-embracing scope. The almost instantaneous success of the satire is established by the advertisement of a second edition on the first of June.[1] This contained the further announcement that speedily would follow 'The Progress of Dulness,' which would serve as an explanation of the poem. It was accompanied with a quotation from 'Paradise Lost' which shows the sense of exulta-

[1] 'Mist's Journal,' June 1: 'The Craftsman,' June 1, 1728. This does not seem to be "the second edition" of the previous advertisements.

tion that now filled the poet's heart at the success of his experiment. The passage, of which the last line is Pope's, reads as follows:

> "(He) as a herd
> Of goats and tim'rous flocks together thronged
> Drove them before him Thunderstruck, pursued
> Into the vast Profund."

A few days later — on June 8 — followed the advertisement of the third edition. These were not all which came out this year. Pope himself in his correspondence spoke of the five surreptitious editions which appeared before the quarto of 1729; and in the list he probably did not include the reprint published in Ireland.[1]

[1] What and how many editions there were of 'The Dunciad' in 1728 are facts not yet definitely ascertained. The list given from 'Notes and Queries' in Elwin and Courthope's 'Works of Pope,' vol. iv. pp. 299-301, numbers five; but included are the Dublin reprint of that year, and three impressions from the same type. There is no mention of an edition — of which Pope first spoke in a note to line 86 of the first book in the quarto of 1729 — which for "glad chains" reads "gold chains." "The ignorance of these moderns!" runs the note on *glad chains*. "This was altered in one edition to 'Gold Chains,' showing more regard to the metal of which the chains of aldermen are made, than to the beauty of the Latinism and Grecism, nay of figurative speech itself. — *Lætas segetes*, glad, for making glad, &c. — Scr."

The edition with the line reading "gold chains" is in the library of Yale University, and is distinct from any of the others described. The substantives with scarcely an exception begin with capital letters. It has on the verso of the last page the announcement found in the newspaper advertisements "Speedily will be published, The Progress of Dulness, an Historical Poem. By an eminent hand. Price 1s. 6d." In the first line also it has *Books* and the spelling *Interludes* in the note on Heywood on page 5. It seems to correspond to the C. C. mentioned in a communication to 'Notes and Queries,' 5th Series, vol. xii. p. 304, Oct. 18, 1879.

CHAPTER XIII

'THE DUNCIAD' OF 1729

THE success of 'The Dunciad' in its incomplete form dispelled any idea Pope may have entertained of keeping the authorship of the poem concealed. He accordingly reverted to his first plan and set out to carry into effect the intimation given in the publisher's preface of a more perfect edition. At this he labored during a good share of the rest of the year. In the preparation of the notes he secured to a slight extent the assistance of his friends; but it was to a very slight extent. Most of them are unmistakably of his composition. Still, he never scrupled to assert that he wrote none of them at all whenever it became convenient for him to disavow their authorship. The work was now to come out with all the learned paraphernalia attending the publication of Greek and Latin classics. Prolegomena, appendices, and textual notes were to be supplied. With the elaborate furniture of 'The Dunciad' all modern students of the poet are familiar, though, while the general plan has remained unaltered, there has been great variation in details. Much of the commentary had unquestionably been prepared long before. But the pieces that appeared after the publication of 'The Dunciad' of 1728 gave Pope

new matter for note and comment; and every opportunity for statement or misstatement, which he believed would serve his turn, was sedulously improved. By the end of the year the new edition was ready for the press.

The news of its coming was spread abroad before it actually came. To Warburton, Theobald wrote in March, 1729, that he would hear "from our friend Concanen" — a friendship which Warburton later took care to forget — that the Parnassian war was likely to break out fiercely again, and that 'The Dunciad' had been pompously reprinted in quarto, and that its publication was every day expected.[1] At the very time this letter was written the work had been advertised as published,[2] and had already been dispersed abroad to some extent by the agency of three good-natured noblemen whom Pope had prevailed upon to act in a certain way as his representatives and accept an assignment of the temporary ownership of the volume before it was allowed to go regularly into the hands of the trade. In the dedication of a collection of pieces about 'The Dunciad' which appeared three years later the statement was made by Pope, through the agency of Savage, that "on the 12th of March, 1729, at St. James's, that poem was presented to the king and queen (who had before been pleased to read it) by the Right Honorable Sir Robert Walpole; and some days after the whole impression was taken and dispersed by several noblemen and persons of the first dis-

[1] Letter of March 18, 1729, in Nichols, vol. ii. p. 209.

[2] "This week is published in a beautiful letter in quarto, A Compleat and Correct Edition of the Dunciad, with the Prolegomena, etc., etc. Printed for A Dod, near Temple Bar." ('London Gazette,' No. 6760, Tuesday, March 11, to Saturday, March 15.)

tinction.[1]" In this same dedication the ridiculous story was gravely told — it was safe then to tell it — that on the day the satire was regularly put to sale, a crowd of authors besieged the publisher's shop, with entreaties, advices, threats of law, even cries of treason, in order to hinder the coming out of the work, while, on the other hand, the booksellers and hawkers made as eager efforts to procure it.[2] This particular specimen of mendacity, of no importance among the more serious mendacities concocted, would not even need an allusion here, had it not been cited, though not certified to, by Dr. Johnson, and in consequence been seriously repeated as a fact by some of Pope's biographers.

This new edition, entitled 'The Dunciad Variorum,' purported to be the first complete and correct one. In form it was an elaborate quarto. It did its proper duty in denouncing the previous ones as surreptitious and inaccurate. The owl of the frontispiece was discarded. In its place appeared an ass, chewing a thistle, and laden with a panier of books upon which an owl was perched. The titles of the volumes were distinctly legible, and works of Welsted, Ward, Dennis, Oldmixon and Mrs. Haywood, and plays of Theobald made up the list. Strewn about in various places were copies of certain newspapers. In the poem itself the names of the persons mentioned in it were, with about half a dozen exceptions, printed in full. There were embraced in it, besides the commentary, several other pieces.

[1] Dedication to the Earl of Middlesex of a Collection of Pieces published on Occasion of the Dunciad, p. vi.

[2] Ibid.

Among these was a prefatory letter to the publisher defending the work itself from charges which had been brought against it, and exhausting the resources of the language in celebrating the virtues of all sorts of its author. This letter was signed by an obscure and inoffensive private gentleman named William Cleland. It is perfectly well known now, it was perfectly well known then, save to the thick-and-thin partisans of the poet, that it was written by Pope himself. The notes were in some instances pretendedly philological, occasionally explanatory, but in most cases personal. Several of the first class purported to come from Theobald himself. These were mainly devoted to casting ridicule upon him and the methods he had employed in establishing the text of Shakespeare.

The very opening note of the commentary is a fair example of the nature of these attacks. It is on the title given to the poem; and as the occasion of it has never been set forth, it may be well to instance it here as a fair specimen of the pretendedly textual annotations which the work contained. The spelling of Shakespeare's name without the final *e* had been general since the Restoration. It so appeared on the title-page of the second impression of the third folio, which bears the date of 1664. So it was spelled in the fourth folio and in the editions of Rowe and Pope. Theobald, who had the scholar's instinct for accuracy in details, followed the original authorities in adding the *e* to the end of the word. He made no comment upon it; he simply used it. This was enough, however, to give Pope the pretext he needed. On the very first page of the poem he

had two elaborate notes on the proper way of spelling the title. They were attributed respectively to Theobald and Scriblerus. The former is represented as doubting whether the right reading had been preserved. Ought it not to be spelled *Dunceiad* with an *e*? Then Pope proceeded to make Theobald talk of himself in the note to which his name is signed. "That accurate and punctual man of letters, the Restorer of Shakespeare," he is reported as saying, "constantly observes the preservation of this very letter *e*, in spelling the name of his beloved author, and not like his common careless editors, with the omission of one, nay sometimes of two *ee*'s (as Shak'spear) which is utterly unpardonable." It may be added that the spelling of the name without the final *e* was followed also in the editions of Hanmer and Warburton. Though now discarded it continued to prevail to some extent during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The practice occasionally extended even into the nineteenth.

The main object of notes like the foregoing was to cast discredit upon Theobald's labors; to convey the impression that the corrections he made did not touch anything essential to the understanding of the author, but were devoted to petty points of punctuation and orthography, that in short they were entitled to the designation which had been given them of "piddling." A number of reflections of this general character were scattered through the commentary; but in consequence of the change of hero they have not been preserved in modern editions. This omission has been a distinct advantage to Pope's later reputation; for however they

may have seemed to the men of his own generation, they would serve now only to reveal his deplorable lack of insight into the proper method of editing the text. But the effect wrought by them remained; and it still remains all the more potent because they themselves have disappeared.

In the appendix was further contained a specimen of a Latin treatise by Scriblerus, styled *Virgilius Restauratus*. This 'Virgil Restored' of Scriblerus was of course intended as a satire upon the title of Theobald's previous criticism of Pope's edition of the dramatist, though it may likewise have been aimed indirectly at Bentley. It started out with the assertion that the text of the Æneid was full of innumerable faults and of spurious readings which had escaped the notice of all commentators. This piece was the beginning of an effort to restore it to its pristine integrity. Then followed various emendations. The wit here displayed was very clumsy and was altogether better calculated to produce depression of spirits than exhilaration. In this edition too there were a number of errata specified. One gets the impression from examining it that the errata had been purposely introduced into the text for the purpose of preparing a comment upon their correction. These, Pope said, he had been disposed to trust to the candor and benignity of the reader to rectify by the pen as accidental faults escaped the press. "But seeing," he added, "that certain censors do give to such the name of Corruptions of the Text and False Readings, charge them on the editor, and judge that correcting the same is to be called Restoring and an achievement that brings

honor to the critic; we have, in like manner, taken it upon ourselves."

Now followed a most singular device for attracting further attention to a work which needed for its success no extraneous support of any kind or from any quarter. It has been the means of perplexing bibliographers immeasurably. While it perhaps can never be so decisively cleared up as to afford no chance for question, the account now to be given satisfies all the conditions which then prevailed and explains all the facts which are now known to exist. It is furthermore in complete harmony with the practices in which the poet during his career was wont to indulge. Pope's genius was sufficient to raise him above all his contemporaries. His writings had likewise this peculiar element of success that they were in fullest accord with the prevalent literary taste of his time. Yet he was never satisfied with the natural curiosity which would necessarily be aroused by the productions of the most popular author of the age. He was always striving to heighten by some device the attention of the public and to revive its interest if he fancied it to be waning. 'The Rape of the Lock' in its complete form had been published only a year, when, not content with the legitimate success which it had obtained, he sought to draw towards it the eyes of the public by a pamphlet about it written by himself under an assumed name. The treatise was entitled 'Key to the Lock.' Its object was to show the dangerous tendency of the poem, and that it was really inimical to the religion and government of the country. No drearier attack was ever made upon Pope's writings by any of the critics he de-

tested than was this affected exposure prepared by himself of the evil designs which had animated him in the composition of this purely literary mock-heroic. Such were the sorts of arts which in his attack upon Addison he intimated had been employed by that writer. They were the ones which had enabled him to rise. He implied that it was because he in turn had employed them that Addison's hostility towards him had been excited. Pope in truth was so accustomed to practising tricks of this kind that he seems in all honesty to have believed that other men were constantly doing the same thing.

In this new enterprise, about to be related, of attracting attention to his work, he was not original. During the previous year Pope had been a curious and interested spectator of a device of Voltaire. It was a contest between rival editions of the same work carried on in the advertising columns of the newspapers. The ingenuity displayed in the whole proceeding was of a kind to kindle the poet's admiration and to call forth his imitation. Voltaire, then exiled to England, had brought out by subscription his epic *La Henriade* in a sumptuous quarto form. It appeared in February, 1728. The next month the expensive quarto edition was followed not by one, but by two cheaper octavo editions. They came or purported to come respectively from the publishing houses of Woodman and Lyon[1] and of Prevost. No sooner were they both on the market than the latter put forth an advertisement in which he said that his was the only complete edition; that it had appeared with the author's consent; and that the two other editions

[1] Wilford's 'Monthly Chronicle' for March, 1728.

— the one in quarto and the one in octavo — had been castrated. Voltaire at once came out with a protest. He had granted no such privilege as claimed. It was something unheard of, he added, for a bookseller to call an author's own edition castrated. On the contrary Prevost had printed six bad lines taken from the old edition of the epic called *La Ligue*, for which in its new form six better lines had been substituted. The publisher in turn was not slow to retort. His, he rejoined, was a perfectly authorized copy of the poem, legitimately acquired, as he could show clearly. Furthermore, he had in his possession several copies of the author's own edition containing the six lines which had been replaced in other copies by those said to be better. Voltaire took care to return at once to the charge with a counter-statement. For some time longer the carefully arranged squabble went on. At last a peace was patched up between the contending parties, and a final advertisement announced that a reconciliation had been effected, and that mutual regard had come to prevail between author and publisher.[1]

In those days newspapers were very small and advertisements were very few. A quarrel carried on in this fashion was certain to come to the knowledge of every reader. A man who could be concerned in so preposterous an effort to heighten interest as the composition of the 'Key to the Lock' was not likely to let go untried a so much more clever device to attract the attention of

[1] See advertising columns of the 'London Post,' 'London Journal,' and 'The Craftsman' during the latter part of March, 1728, and subsequently. The advertisement announcing the reconciliation of the two parties can be found in 'The Craftsman' for June 1.

the public. He not only followed it, but improved upon it. Pope was not indeed one to engage personally in a controversy of this sort. There was nothing in his nature of Voltaire's reckless hardihood and directness in carrying out his schemes. But he saw his way to make the artifice more effective. Voltaire's experiment of following the expensive quarto with two cheaper octavos instead of a single one recommended itself as an example worth imitating. He proceeded at once to imitate it, and it was in the following fashion that the thing was done.

The editions of 1728 had been printed for A. Dodd. The quarto of 1729 bore on its title-page the name of A. Dod. So it had been given in the advertisement announcing it, but with the added notice that the place of business was "near Temple Bar." [1] This would indicate that the work came from the publishing-house from which had proceeded the editions of the year before. Thither accordingly expecting purchasers would resort; there the work would doubtless be found. The omission in the advertisement of one of the *d*'s of the name would be regarded as merely an error of the press. But when the quarto actually made its appearance and the name of the publisher which stood on the title-page was not A. Dodd but A. Dod, the matter assumed a different aspect. The dropping of the final letter was clearly due to no accident. Furthermore A. Dod's place of business was not designated. This was at that time the usual though not invariable practice of reputable publishers, in days when streets were not numbered and

[1] See note to page 242.

directories did not abound. There seems no escape from the conclusion that the proper name had been shorn of its second *d* deliberately. The action was intended to pave the way for the devices which were to follow.

Dod's quarto had not been long out before it was followed by an octavo purporting to be published not by A. Dod, but by A. Dob. This name was even more mysterious than the one of which it took the place. As in that case there was here, too, nothing on the title-page to indicate the local habitation of its owner. He seems to have been a purely mythical creation. In what follows, however, he will be treated as a genuine character until the time of his disappearance a few months after. Dob's octavo was an exact reprint of the quarto. If there were any changes at all, they were due to the printer. It so closely followed its model that it reproduced some of its minutest typographical errors, such for instance as 'Attilla' for 'Atila' and 'Chi-hoamte' instead of 'Chi-hoamti' in the Index of Persons. Again, it followed it in placing against line 163 of Book II the figures 165, and consequently made the succeeding numbering all wrong as well as the whole number of lines contained in the book. Not even were the errata given in the quarto corrected. The volume had also prefixed the frontispiece of the ass laden with volumes.

Shortly after Dob's edition appeared, came out another. It differed from the previous octavo in type and general appearance.[1] It bore on its title-page the name of Lawton

[1] This is the edition which Pope refers to in his letter of Oct. 9, 1729 ('Works,' vol. vii. p. 158). In it he says, "You will find the octavo rather more correct than the quarto, with some additions to the notes and epi-

Gilliver, who was to become the publisher of many of Pope's later writings. His place of business was given as being at "Homer's Head, against St. Dunstan's church, Fleet street." The volume contained as its frontispiece the owl of the edition of 1728, though that of the ass was also included in the body of the work, at least in some copies. In this octavo were found certain changes and additions which Pope made to the work after the appearance of the quarto a few weeks before. They were not a dozen in all, nor were they generally of any great importance. The corrections indicated by the errata of the previous editions were here made. Still, Pope was unwilling to part with the implied sneer at Theobald with which the list of these had opened. So he substituted another set of errata containing the rectification of various slight errors which had crept into the text of the Greek and Latin passages that had been cited. This gave him the desired opportunity of reflecting ironically upon the ignorance of the author of 'The Dunciad' in quantity, accent, and grammar in the two ancient tongues as well as in his own.

As soon as Gilliver had put his edition upon the market he accompanied it with an advertisement denouncing the one published by Dob. This was declared to be surreptitious, piratical, and imperfect. A list of the most important deficiencies were given and the pages where they occurred. These were naturally the additions which had been made to the reading matter in the prolegomena

grams cast in." It cannot refer to the later edition of this same year, as is said by Courthope in the note to this letter. That, which bears on the title-page "The Second edition," etc., was not then published.

and notes in this second octavo. The only true edition, it was added, was the one printed for Lawton Gilliver, at whose shop could be had also the few copies that were left of the quarto. It was clear from this announcement that A. Dod had retired from business and had passed over his stock to the one who was to become Pope's regular publisher. At least he disappeared from any further connection with 'The Dunciad' save that in some of the Gilliver octavos his name is found with a slightly different title-page prefixed to what is in other respects the same edition.

To Gilliver's advertisement Dob at once replied vigorously in another advertisement and at considerable length. He scornfully repelled the attack upon the volume which had come from his press. He stated, and very truly stated, that all the pretended deficiencies in his edition were equally true of the pompous quarto. The few trifling additions found in Gilliver's octavo, which were asserted to be so material, he could further furnish printed separately. These would be given gratis to all persons who had bought or might hereafter buy the octavo printed by himself. From him too could be purchased for two shillings what the public had been insulted by having been required to pay as great a price as six shillings and sixpence to secure in the quarto which contained no more. Further he could point with pride to the fact that men could get from him for a less price the same matter for which Gilliver charged three shillings. In this way for about a month the mythical Dob and the real Gilliver hurled defiance at each other through the advertising columns

of the newspapers.[1] At last this farcical war ceased altogether. In the silence which ensued, Dob followed Dod in disappearing from the publishing field.

All the evidence obtainable points directly to the conclusion that Gilliver was really the publisher of the edition of 1729, so far as it had any publisher save Pope himself; and that from his shop came, directly or indirectly, the quarto and both the octavo editions. The first of these, indeed, though it did not bear his name on the title-page, was advertised by him shortly after its appearance.[2] He certainly was the sole survivor of the conflict, if there was any conflict. Later in the same year this same publishing-house brought out the second edition of the work "with some additional notes." It corresponded very closely in its typography with his previous octavo edition. At the outset, in fact, its paging was precisely the same, reproducing even the error by which the numbering of pages 19 to 24 was repeated. Its coming was announced some time before it came.[3] It was advertised in September

[1] This controversy was carried on in the columns of the 'Daily Journal' and 'Daily Post' and doubtless in other papers. Gilliver's attack on Dob can be found in the 'Daily Journal' of April 27, and 'Daily Post' of April 29 and April 30. Dob's counterblast in the 'Daily Journal' of April 27, and for some days later: in the number for May 3, its form was somewhat changed.

[2] 'Monthly Chronicle' for April, 1729.

[3] "Next week will be published, The Second Edition, with some additional notes and epigrams, 'The Dunciad' with notes Variorum, and the Prolegomena of Scriblerus. Printed for Lawton Gilliver at Homer's Head, etc." ('The Daily Post,' Wednesday, Sept. 10, 1729.) From the same paper, Monday, Nov. 24, "This day is published, The Second Edition with some additional notes and epigrams," etc. etc., as above. See also Wilford's 'Monthly Chronicle' for November, 1729,

as immediately to appear. The publication, however, was delayed for two months. Late in October Theobald wrote to Warburton that a new edition of 'The Dunciad' had been threatened for some weeks. The sword, he added, had been suspended, and had not yet fallen.[1] It was not till the end of November that the revised work made its appearance. This is the edition of which Pope wrote to Swift that it was "the second, as it is called, but indeed the eighth edition of 'The Dunciad,' with some additional notes and epigrams."[2]

This new volume of 1729 contained in its commentary a quantity of additional matter. Among the notes was inserted an epigram to the effect that it was generous in Theobald to help people read the works of others. For so doing he could never hope for an adequate return; for his own works nobody could be expected to help others to read. With the exception of this and of a false variation of a previous false statement, there was no further reference to the hero of the satire. The attacks fell upon others, — Ward, Welsted, Moore-Smythe, Roome, Burnet, Duckett — against whom Pope entertained sentiments of hostility. These took largely the form of epigrams. In later editions slight alterations were made both in the text and the notes; but until the recast of 1743 the poet clearly regarded this so-called second edition as 'The Dunciad' in its final form. A statement to that effect may be said to have been implied in the declaration

in which 'The Dunciad,' second edition, is the fifty-sixth of sixty-four entries.

[1] Letter of Oct. 25, Nichols, vol. ii. p. 248.

[2] Pope to Swift, letter of Nov. 28, 1729, Pope's 'Works,' vol. vii. p. 172.

purporting to have been made by the author before the mayor of London on the third of January, 1732, which was appended to the later editions. This asserted that the poem, in the authentic form here given, contained "the entire sum of one thousand and twelve lines." It strictly enjoined and forbade any person or persons to change directly or indirectly any word, figure, point, or comma in it as now found.

The object of producing this declaration was to indulge in a further sneer at Theobald, whose edition of Shakespeare was then well known to be in preparation, and in fact was expected to appear at any time. The animus could be easily detected in its very opening. In this the reason given for its introduction was that "certain haberdashers of points and particles, being instigated by the spirit of pride, and assuming to themselves the name of Critics and Restorers, have taken upon them to adulterate the common and Current sense of our glorious ancestors, poets of this realm; by clipping, coining, defacing the images, or mixing their own base allay, or otherwise falsifying the same, which they publish, utter, and vend as genuine." Regret was further expressed that the poet's great predecessor had not adopted the practice here set "as a remedy and prevention of all such abuses." It is a matter of no consequence in itself, but it is a striking illustration of the carelessness which Pope had more than once manifested in his edition of Shakespeare that his own numbering of the lines of 'The Dunciad,' which were to be regarded as authentic, was not true of any edition of it ever published. He gave it as ten hundred and

twelve. The editions of 1728 consisted of nine hundred and twenty lines, the three earlier editions of 1729 of ten hundred and fourteen, and the so-called second edition of the same year, followed by the later ones, of ten hundred and eighteen.

CHAPTER XIV

ERRORS ABOUT 'THE DUNCIAD'

For more than half a century scholars have devoted time and labor to clearing up the difficulties connected with the original publication of 'The Dunciad.' Their efforts have been crowned with substantial success. The problems they were called upon to solve had long been the puzzle of bibliographers. They were made hard to elucidate by the elaborate system of falsification of statement and mystification of fact which attended the work from the outset. The effort to mislead was never indeed abandoned entirely. It was the source of numerous slight variations in the early editions, for the existence of which no pretext can be found save the intention to obscure and perplex. The bibliographical statements which are true in general of the copies of any impression are subject to exception in the case of particular copies belonging to it.

This bibliographical obscurity, however, once enveloping the original 'Dunciad' has now been pretty effectually dispelled. But there still remain misapprehensions of a totally different kind. The legendary past has handed down nothing more mythical than some of the beliefs which have grown up about this satire. They continue to find expression in the lives of the

poet and in works dealing with the literature of the period. Statements are regularly made concerning 'The Dunciad' which, even if they have become true now, were not true at the time of its appearance. Some of them, however widely circulated and constantly repeated, have never been true at any time. Yet they have been and are so universally accepted that to doubt or deny them will seem to many as being of the nature of a blow aimed at the foundations of all accredited literary history. No small number of these false assertions are connected with Theobald and his edition of Shakespeare. But the utter untrustworthiness of the representations made about him cannot be fully comprehended until certain general statements in regard to 'The Dunciad' have been disposed of which have had wide vogue for a century and a half. They are three in number. One of them indeed has been of late years largely abandoned as a result of the better knowledge which modern times have gained of Pope and his practices. But the two others still continue to flourish with all their original vitality.

The first of these is the assertion that the men whom Pope chose to stigmatize as dunces were really dunces. This is a view of them which cannot well be taken save by those who look upon the vast majority of mankind as properly entitled to that designation. There may be justification for this wholesale view; but it is attended with the disagreeable adjunct that it involves including the person accepting it in any impartial definition of the word. The truth is that nearly all the writers satirized in 'The Dunciad' had either distinguished themselves or were to distinguish themselves in some particular

field of intellectual effort. The position they held in the eyes of the public furnishes presumptive proof that they were not dunces. In most instances they were far from being great in any sense; but they had talents of a certain kind. They may have written very indifferent poetry. But they did something in some way sufficiently out of the common to attract the attention of readers and hearers. Men have largely forgotten who and what these writers were, just as the men of future times will forget writers who, however eminent in our own day, have not ability sufficient to raise them to the highest rank. Merit may make an author more or less conspicuous in his own generation, or accident may make him notorious; but it requires genius to transmit his name to posterity as an active vital force.

It is the names only of the contemporaries of Pope living at the time of the appearance of 'The Dunciad' which concern us here. Nor does there come into the discussion any consideration of their character. It is with their ability, not with their morals, that we have to deal. Some of them may have been justly liable to all the charges brought against them by Pope and his partisans; but that fact, if true, does not prove them to be dunces. Theophilus Cibber, for instance, seems to have been a man whose character was almost as contemptible as that of Pope's jackal, Savage; still he was very far from being a fool. But leaving out of consideration for the present men little known now, it is not likely that any one will venture to advertise himself as a dunce by giving that appellation to Defoe. Pope himself, though he had no real appreciation of that author's genius and

never ceased from making him an object of attack, had still occasional glimpses of the absurdity of so designating him. In the addition to a note upon him which appeared first in the Gilliver octavo of 1729[1] he relented so far as to remark that Daniel Defoe "had parts." Yet even this seems to have been added to make more effective the attack upon his son Norton, of whom he said that he had no parts at all.

To defend Defoe from the charge of being a dunce would be an insult to every reader's intelligence. But who that is familiar with English literature would apply that term to Ambrose Philips? Him, during the whole of his later career, Pope pursued with unrelenting virulence. Yet Philips was a man of high character, and of talents much more than respectable. The places he held could not have been filled by an incompetent man, nor could the pieces he produced have been written by a dull one. Again, Dennis the critic was in his way as foul-mouthed as Pope himself in his treatment of those with whom he engaged in controversy, though he lacked entirely the poet's power of pointed expression. Yet, with all his coarseness of abuse, his habit of virulent vituperation, he was not only possessed of much learning, but exhibited in many ways keen critical insight. It was not for nothing that he was regarded by so many of his contemporaries as the master-critic of his age, and that with all Pope's dislike of him there was mingled in his mind a certain dread.

Or take the eccentric, not to say half-crazy, Eustace Budgell. A man who was permitted by Steele and

[1] Book 1, line 101; modern editions, line 103.

Addison to be their associate, who contributed to 'The Spectator' numerous essays, may have been wanting in many important qualities, but he cannot well be reckoned a fool. Upon him, indeed, has fallen the ill-fortune which attended so many whom Pope looked upon as his foes. The poet's views about his contemporaries were largely adopted by Dr. Johnson, the critical autocrat of the following generation. In his lives of the poets, he gave wide circulation and permanent acceptance to derogatory stories which in some cases hardly rose to the dignity of gossip. For illustration, Budgell wrote the epilogue to Ambrose Philips's play of 'The Distrest Mother,' founded upon the *Andromaque* of Racine. It was very successful; in fact, it is said to be the most successful piece of the kind ever recited on the English stage. For this, and apparently for no other reason, efforts have been put forth to deprive the author of the reputation, such as it is, of having written it. Budgell was Addison's cousin; therefore Addison was the real composer of the piece. Johnson tells us that Garrick told him that it was known to the Tonsons that Addison was the writer, and had substituted at the last moment his cousin's name for his own in order that the interests of the former might be advanced. This precious piece of second-hand gossip, has since been regularly repeated. Not the slightest respect need be paid to it. The epilogue is not in the least a remarkable production. There is nothing in it Budgell could not easily have written; there are things in it Addison would not have written.

We need not linger over a name like that of the anti-

quary Hearne, towards whom Pope's attitude was not one of hostility, but of amused contempt. Let us consider the case of men, known now only to special students of the period, who, in some instances, were made the object of his bitterest attacks. Nearly all of them achieved in their own time a degree of success which raised them above the rank and file of their contemporaries. Welsted, though lacking the saving grace of genius, was no mean adept in the production of the sort of poetry, then most in vogue. Some of his verses were sufficiently pointed to cut Pope to the quick. Cooke was a classical scholar, whose translations of Hesiod and of Terence were long held in highest repute, and even to this day are spoken of with respect. Ward's pages are still read by the curious for the pictures they drew of London life. Or take the popular lecturer who went under the name of Orator Henley. He reviled Pope in his discourses and was reviled by him in his poems. Yet, a preacher who, for more than a quarter of a century could maintain a chapel by the voluntary contributions of attendants, who during that long period could continue to draw audiences to listen to him twice a week, — such a man may have been guilty of many discreditable devices, he may have resorted to every trick characteristic of the charlatan, but he clearly must have been possessed of abilities of a certain sort.

Even more marked is the case of Ralph. He was possibly, and perhaps probably, not a person of the highest character. He may have sold his services to opposing leaders and opposing parties. Such a fact — if it be a fact — will put him in the class of rogues; but it

removes him at once from the class of dunces. Nor, indeed, is it likely that he was a dunce whom Benjamin Franklin for a long time regarded as a friend, and to whom he dedicated one of his works. Nor, again, is he likely to have been a dunce whom Fielding joined with him in a journalistic enterprise, and whom Hallam describes as "the most diligent historian we possess of the time of Charles II." Or take the case of dramatists. Charles Johnson was in his own age a generally successful playwright. He was charged by his enemies with having taken from other authors most of what he put forward as his own, and of then having forgotten to acknowledge his indebtedness. If true, this course of conduct implies rascality, and not imbecility. He stole, and succeeded; other men stole as much as he and did not succeed.

A statement not essentially different can be made about the ability of the party-writers of the day. By those who have carefully refrained from reading a line they ever wrote they have been denounced as peculiarly stupid and utterly malignant. He who is willing to take the pains to render himself even slightly familiar with their articles recognizes at once the falsity of this view. Their work was no better and no worse than what was done before and after them. It was no better and no worse than most of that which is done to-day. The fate which has befallen it is the precise fate that is destined to overtake all editorial production which concerns itself with matters that have merely the vitality of the passing moment. What is written may be excellent; it is sometimes brilliant; but it cannot endure,

because it concerns itself only with the changing questions of the hour. The instant these cease to exist, they drag to death everything concerned with them. Did not Swift and Addison live for us by their other works, their political articles would have been as generally forgotten as have those of the feeblest of their successors. No one reads now these productions of theirs for enjoyment. No one thinks of consulting them, save those who are making a special study of the political history of that period. Such is the fate of all party-writing. The themes which once stirred the heart of the writer are dead to the later reader beyond all hope of resurrection. As we no longer care for them in the slightest, we naturally care not for what is said about them. What is written is to us, therefore, necessarily dull. But it is not necessarily dull in itself. Still less was it dull to the men of the time whose convictions it expressed and to whose passions it appealed. None of the journalists of that day were great men; but several were distinctly able men.

One of these writers whom Pope hated with peculiar hatred was Concanen. For the feeling he displayed he may be conceded to have had a certain justification; for in this instance he seems not to have been the aggressor. Concanen was an Irishman by birth, a lawyer by profession, who took to literature by choice. As a poet his production was thoroughly commonplace; as a journalist, so far as he devoted himself to that occupation, he was both able and effective. Theobald's criticism of Pope's Shakespeare had excited his admiration. It led him to express of it a high opinion before he knew personally

its author. Acquaintance tended to increase the favorable estimate which he had already formed of the commentator's powers. This naturally would not recommend him to Pope; but he drew upon himself the poet's bitter resentment by a review he wrote of the 'Miscellanies.' We must keep in mind that in those days 'Miscellany' was the title regularly given to collections of hitherto unprinted or little known pieces by various authors. Consequently, when the first two volumes of Pope and Swift's appeared, buyers felt themselves tricked at receiving something which they discovered they already had in their possession. A certain resentment was entertained, as if an imposition had been practised upon the public.

To this feeling Concanen, in his article, gave very decided expression. He reviewed the 'Miscellanies' with a severity which amounted almost to acrimony.[1] He remarked that when he found that the greatest part of the pieces thus published already existed in an octavo volume, and that the rest were very common either in single pamphlets or in old collections, he began to fancy that the work was merely a bookseller's fraud upon the public. Such an imputation was of itself offensive enough. But what followed was especially calculated to irritate the poet. Concanen went on to say that he was filled with surprise at finding the preface signed by the great names of Swift and Pope. The former he knew to be very careless about prefixing his name to such of his works as he published himself. He could not therefore understand the motive which had induced

[1] Letter in the 'British Journal,' No. 270, Nov. 25, 1727.

him to join the other in putting out a collection of second-hand wares. At this point followed a remark which, while undoubtedly representing a belief then widely prevalent, ought never to have been made of an author so eminent unless based on positive proof. He had heard, he said, that Pope had been often concerned in such kinds of jobs and had hired out his name to stand sentinel before the inventions of booksellers. It is no wonder that the poet resented this imputation upon his character. He was irritated beyond measure, and he furnished ample proof of it in 'The Grub-street Journal,'[1] — especially so when, a few years after, Concanen was made attorney-general for Jamaica. This was a post, it may be added, which he filled with great credit to himself and with great satisfaction to the inhabitants of the island.

Concanen's name had not been introduced into the treatise on the Bathos; but his after-acts necessarily caused it to be inserted in 'The Dunciad.' According to Pope he was the author of a preface to the collection of verses and essays which had been occasioned by the publication of the third volume of the 'Miscellanies.' This was addressed to the then unknown author of 'The Dunciad.' It was a severe and able criticism of the spirit with which that satire had been written, though the usual mistake was made of not giving recognition to the ability which had been displayed in its creation and execution. He was also represented by Pope as being

[1] See 'Grub-Street Journal,' No. 32, Aug. 13, 1730; No. 35, Sept. 3, 1730; No. 38, Sept. 24, 1730; and No. 138, Aug. 24, 1732. Most if not all of these articles were pretty certainly written by Pope himself.

the author of a treatise which appeared in August, 1728, entitled 'A Supplement to the Profund.' This was largely given up to examples of this so-called 'profund' drawn from the writings of Pope and Swift, especially the former. It is an illustration of the readiness of men to accept the derogatory estimate the poet expressed of his adversaries that Warton tells us that this work displays so much ability that it is likely Concanen had in its preparation the aid of Warburton, with whom he was at that time on terms of peculiar intimacy.[1] This observation is in the true style of eighteenth-century criticism. A conclusion is first reached on general principles as to just how able a man must be. Then, when something presents itself exhibiting superiority to this assumed conception of his talents, its existence is accounted for by surmising, and sometimes stating as a fact, that in composing it he had received aid from some one else. The suspicion in this case has not even the merit of plausibility. The particular treatise here referred to was one which men inferior to Concanen could well have produced. Much of it is verbal criticism. Though occasionally good, it exhibits all the defects of verbal criticism, the petty cavilling at constructions and words which the censurer does not understand or does not like.

Furthermore, the charge that the men satirized in 'The Dunciad' were really dunces becomes particularly absurd the moment we turn our attention away from literature proper. No small number of those whose names appear in this poem had attained prom-

[1] Warton's Pope, vol. vi. p. 237.

inence in occupations in which dulness may be considered an absolute barrier to success. This is true in particular of those who were engaged in the practice of law. Not even under the most corrupt governments are inferior men placed in posts of responsibility where acumen and legal knowledge are required. Yet if we are to accept Pope's testimony, this was largely the custom under Walpole. Concanen has already been mentioned. Both Horneck and Roome were solicitors of the treasury. The latter was a friend of Warburton. "I am at this moment," wrote to him Theobald in December, 1729, "alarmed with the death of our common acquaintance and favorite, poor Mr. Roome."[1] Popple was solicitor and clerk of the reports to the commissioners of trade and plantations. In 1745 he was made governor of the Bermudas and occupied that position through all changes of administration till just before his death in 1764. Burnet, if a dunce, was one of that class of dunces whom for time immemorial the English government has been in the habit of raising to the bench. In 1741 he was made judge of the court of common pleas and attained wide reputation for the learning he possessed and the ability he displayed.

It may be said that these men were not attacked as lawyers, but as authors. But assuming — what in some instances cannot be assumed safely — that they failed in literature, that failure does not make them dunces any more than Pope's failure as an editor consigns him to such a class. But even this sort of pretext will be of no avail in the case of certain writers who appear in

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 326.

'The Dunciad' on account of their theological views. There is nothing more noticeable in the literary history of the eighteenth century than the zeal for orthodoxy manifested by its men of letters. They might lead the loosest of lives; they might be guilty of the most discreditable practices; they might be spendthrifts, drunkards, libertines, liars, hypocrites; but they could always plead in their own behalf that they were perfectly sound in the faith. They were shocked and indignant if any one put forth views which were not of the regulation pattern. Pope fully shared in this prevalent feeling of the men of his class. Toland and Tindal were held up to reprobation in all editions of 'The Dunciad.' Collins appeared too in the original edition of 1728, but for some reason was dropped later with a complimentary note.

Woolston, however, was the one who fell under special condemnation. For putting upon Scripture an allegorical interpretation he had drawn down upon himself much clerical censure. But when, in 1726, his work on miracles came out, all the orthodox element in the realm was disturbed. The views expressed in it attracted to him the active attention of the government. To correct the error of his ways it shut him up in prison for the rest of his life. Pope joined with great fervor in the general outcry. In a note to the quarto edition of 1729, Woolston was designated as "an impious madman."[1] By the time the Gilliver octavo appeared, the poet's religious zeal had distinctly increased. The pile of books in the owl frontispiece had originally had at its summit Blackmore's epic of 'Arthur.' For this was then substituted a volume

[1] Book 3, line 208; in modern editions, line 212.

entitled 'Gildon and Woolston against Christ.' It is hardly necessary to remark that whatever may be thought of the opinions of the rationalistic writers of the eighteenth century no one, unless he combined the qualities of a fool with those of a bigot, would venture to maintain that they were dunces. Nor will any one who has interest enough in the subject itself to read their works pretend that they are dull.

That some of the men satirized in 'The Dunciad' were possessed of only ordinary abilities is unquestionable. It is equally true that but very few of them were possessed of extraordinary abilities. But if they are to be deemed dunces because they entertained or were supposed to entertain towards Pope feelings of hostility, this exact term can with as much justice be applied to those who ranged themselves under his banner. The same forgetfulness which has overtaken the writers he attacked has overtaken the writers he patronized and praised and befriended. Who reads now the poetry of Bramston, of James Miller, of Paul Whitehead, or even that of Mallet, all of whom came forward on his side in the course of his controversies? No dullest opponent of Pope ever produced anything more aggressively dull than the poetical 'Essay upon Satire' which Walter Harte wrote in his defence. These were men whose works he held up to honor. Had they been on the other side they would have held a prominent place in the roll of those he delighted to call dunces.

No flimsier structure has ever been built upon more insecure foundations than the belief in the special intellectual inferiority of the men attacked in 'The Dunciad.'

Upon an equally insecure basis rests another widely accepted belief. We are told on every hand that the publication of this satire practically resulted in the annihilation of the authors whose names appeared in it. This belief seems to be fully accepted by most, if not indeed by all, literary historians. They have this excuse for the credulity they manifest, that it had its birth at an early date and was assiduously nursed by the partisans of the poet. He had not been in his grave eight years before it was proclaimed by an authority presumably so impartial as Fielding. In one of the novelist's essays a brief history was given of the commonwealth of letters in England. Dryden was represented as having for a long time ruled. To him had succeeded King Alexander, surnamed Pope. "He is said," wrote Fielding, "to have been extremely jealous of the affections of his subjects, and to have employed various spies, by whom if he was informed of the least suggestion against his title, he never failed of branding the accused person with the word *dunce* on his forehead in broad letters; after which the unhappy culprit was obliged to lay by his pen for ever; for no bookseller would venture to print a word that he wrote."[1] Fielding went on to say that without Pope's license and approbation no person durst read anything which was written.

These exaggerated statements are interesting, coming, as they do, from a contemporary. They are much more valuable, however, for the light they throw upon the prevalent impression as to the poet's proceedings than

[1] Covent Garden Journal, No. 23, March 21, 1752.

from any revelation they make of the fate which befell the authors he attacked. But the wide currency of the belief in modern times is due to the statement made by Dr. Johnson in his life of Pope. Johnson tells us that Ralph unnecessarily interfered in the quarrel caused by the satire and thereby got a place in the subsequent editions. The assertion is true. Its very truth shows that dread of the poet was not so widespread as is now the custom to report it as having been. But Johnson then went on to say that Ralph complained that as a consequence he was for a time in danger of starving, inasmuch as the booksellers had no longer any confidence in his capacity. Where and when he made the complaint we are not informed. It is not unlikely to have come to Johnson's ears from his friend Savage, who in a community where liars flourished luxuriantly seems to be entitled to the distinction of having been the greatest liar of all.

Whether the words ascribed to Ralph were ever uttered or not, there is incontestable evidence that the poem never had the slightest effect in restraining his literary and political activity. For a long time following the publication of 'The Dunciad' scarcely a twelvemonth went by in which he did not bring out a work of some sort or engage in some journalistic enterprise. The very year in which the enlarged edition of the satire was published he struck a more serious blow at his own literary reputation than it was in the power of Pope to inflict. He produced a long and unspeakably tedious poem in blank verse entitled 'Zeuma; or the Love of Liberty.' Early in the year following, a

piece of his, styled 'The Fortunate Lady; or Harlequin Opera,' was acted at the theater which had just been started in Goodman's Fields, and met with a good deal of success. In fact, for the remaining thirty years of Ralph's life there was confidence enough in his capacity to keep him all the while actively employed. It is manifest that the complaint, if ever uttered at all — which is more than doubtful — was due to an outbreak of some temporary mood of depression. Even were we to concede that it was made in all seriousness and sincerity, it would be an unwarranted inference to assume that it was typical. Yet mainly on the strength of it all the other authors assailed have been described as living in a constant state of anxiety for fear that neither publishers would bring out their works nor readers buy them if published.

It would indeed be a matter of interest to ascertain the names of some of the writers whose works were refused publication in consequence of their having been satirized in 'The Dunciad.' There is not a single one of them, who was in the vigor of his powers at the time, that did not continue his literary labors after this poem appeared, and several of them immediately after. Oldmixon kept up the production of historical and party writings to the time of his death in 1742. Ozell's life had been largely devoted to translations, and to the end of it, in 1743, he never ceased translating. Johnson's plays were accepted as readily at Drury Lane after he had been enrolled in 'The Dunciad' as they had been before. Nor was the attitude of the public towards them influenced at all by this fact, though on one occa-

sion he tried hard to solace himself with the belief that the hostile reception one of his plays met was due to the influence of Pope.[1] Even a more signal illustration of the powerlessness of this attack upon the immediate fortunes of those assailed is seen in the case of Mrs. Haywood. In his personal onslaughts upon women, Pope was one of the most brutal of men. As early as this poem of 'The Dunciad' he had manifested his hostility to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu by insinuations and reflections upon her character and acts, though he did not venture to insert her name in the Index of Persons. But the attack upon Mrs. Haywood exceeded all bounds of decency. To the credit of the English race nothing so dastardly and vulgar can be found elsewhere in English literature. If the influence of 'The Dunciad' was so all-powerful as to ruin the prospects of any one it satirized, it ought certainly to have crushed her beyond the hope of any revival. As a matter of fact Mrs. Haywood's most successful and popular writings were produced after the publication of that poem, and that too at a period when Pope's predominance was far higher than it was at the time the satire itself appeared.

The case of Cooke, usually termed Hesiod Cooke, has been singled out as a typical example of the terror inspired by Pope's work. Certainly if such dread existed, his is the only conduct which can be cited as furnishing direct evidence of its prevalence. For that reason it is worth while to give an account of it in detail. 'The Dunciad' in its original form belongs, as we have

[1] Preface to 'Medæa,' 1731.

seen, to May, 1728. In it there was the following line,

"C—— shall be Prior and C——n Swift."

Cooke was about the only author whose name, beginning with an initial C, would suit the measure. While it could not be definitely asserted that he was the person intended, no one acquainted with the minor poets of the time would have been likely to hit upon any one else. The 'Key to The Dunciad,' which speedily followed, settled the question for those who were ignorant. Cooke's offence had not been a very flagrant one. In 1725 when he had but little more than reached his majority he had published anonymously what he termed an heroic poem. It was in two cantos and was entitled 'The Battle of the Poets.' In it Pope was spoken of, in general, in high terms. He was represented as leader of one of the two opposing armies. Under him were ranged several of the most noted authors of the day, Fenton, Young, Gay, Aaron Hill, Tickell, Savage, and singularly enough, Colley Cibber.

In spite of this tribute to his position, much that was said in the poem was necessarily distasteful and displeasing to Pope. It put on an equality with him Welsted, whom he detested. It represented Ambrose Philips as carrying off in triumph the laurel crown, and as now reigning upon earth as the great Apollo. Further, there were two places specially calculated to arouse resentment in a man of the poet's sensitive nature. In one line it had been said that great as were Pope's merits, they were not so great as his reputation.[1] There was

[1] "In merit great, but greater far in fame," p. 78 (ed. of 1725).

another passage which was even more offensive. Dennis, "the modern author's dread," was described as ranging round the field for spoil. In so doing he encountered Pope. As this poem came out just after the appearance of the edition of Shakespeare, we can get from the lines which follow some conception of the impression produced by the way that task had been executed before Theobald's exposure of its defects had been published. It is in these words that the poet is addressed by the redoubtable critic:

> "Next to their mighty chief he turned his eye,
> By whom he saw the deathless Grecian lie;
> And Shakespeare stood, stupendous ruins, by.
> Oh! mercenary bard, the critic cried,
> For lesser faults than these have thousands died;
> Too dire an instance of what gold can do,
> That thy own countryman must suffer too!
> Too weighty are thy crimes for me to bear,
> He spoke and left the guilty volumes there."[1]

Any praise, therefore, that in this poem had been accorded to Pope was much more than offset by the unpardonable offence of speaking in high terms of Welsted and of leaving Ambrose Philips master of the field. Worse than all was the reflection upon his character implied in the words given to Dennis. Cooke knew perfectly well that he was the one intended in the line just cited from 'The Dunciad.' Furthermore, news reached him that he was regarded by Pope as the author of several attacks which had appeared in the newspapers. This he wrote to deny. He naturally recognized the undesirability of being selected for satire by the most popular poet of the

[1] Battle of the Poets, ed. of 1725, p. 15.

age. Especially would he feel that he had a right to remonstrate, if he were assailed for writing articles with which he had had nothing to do. There may have been disingenuousness in Cooke's proceedings. He may have actually been concerned in some of the pieces which he was suspected by Pope of having composed. But whether he equivocated or lied is beside the present question. There appears nowhere in his letters any sign or indication of that abject terror with which he has been regularly credited.

Cooke's course indeed was precisely such as any fearless man of the present day would follow in addressing an author of highest eminence who, he discovered, had been suspecting him unjustly. He took occasion to disavow the sentiments expressed in 'The Battle of the Poets'— a poem of which he declared he was sincerely ashamed. There seems little doubt that he had come to look upon it not only as a boyish performance, but as one not very creditable to his judgment even as a boy, which it assuredly was not. There is accordingly no reason to question the sincerity of his declaration that he intended, not to modify it, but to leave it out entirely of the collection of his pieces in prose and verse which he was on the point of publishing. Undoubtedly Cooke would have been glad to be in Pope's good graces. But neither in this nor in the subsequent letter did he say anything unmanly. He deprecated attack upon himself, but he did not disown his friendship with men whom the poet looked upon with special dislike. On the contrary, he admitted that he associated with several who had written against Pope. For some

of them, he said, he had real respect; for others as sovereign a contempt as had the man he was addressing. But in the former class he included James Moore. For him he expressed high esteem. Had he been particularly solicitous to avert attack from himself, he must have been well aware that he could hardly have taken a poorer method of ingratiating himself with the poet than by the expression of such a sentiment.

We know that Pope, after some hesitation, decided to disbelieve Cooke's assertion. Accordingly in the quarto edition of 1729 his name appeared in full with a note further attacking him.[1] This, so far from annihilating Cooke, merely made him angry. He certainly did not sit down quietly under it. He had doubtless become aware of Pope's determination before it manifested itself in act. His new volume followed hard upon the appearance of the quarto edition of the satire. Instead of carrying out his previous intention of suppressing 'The Battle of the Poets,' he rewrote it, largely changing its character. In the revised version Pope was assailed with great virulence, both in the piece itself and in the preface to it. He was taunted with secretly flinging dirt at both friend and foe, and with the mercenary motives by which he had been influenced in his literary labors.[2] It is evident that Cooke's publisher had not

[1] Book 2, l. 130; in modern editions, l. 138.

[2] "Who better knows than I his dust to throw?
To wound in secret either friend or foe?
. . . . . .
A genius formed like mine will soar at all,
And boldly follow where subscriptions call;
My gentle touch from Homer cleared the rust;
And from the brow of Shakespear wiped the dust."

been dissuaded from bringing out his work, and that Cooke personally did not consider himself crushed.

Pope was stung by this renewed attack. In the second edition of 1729 he gave proof of his resentment at this contumacy. To his previous note charging Cooke with openly assailing him in several journals, he added that at the very time he was doing so, "the honest gentleman sent letters to Mr. P. in the strongest terms protesting his innocence."[1] But Cooke, like Pharaoh of old, hardened his heart. In the edition of his poems which appeared in 1742, when Pope's supremacy was undisputed, he reiterated all his previous opinions and charges. The same contumacious course had previously been taken by Concanen. Pope had stigmatized him as the author of several scurrilities in the British and London Journals.[2] These contributions of his to those periodicals he reprinted in 'The Speculatist.' He did not do it, he said in his advertisement, "from any opinion of their excellence, but to refute the calumny of a rancorous and foul-mouthed railer, who has asserted in print that the author of them wrote several scurrilities in those papers."

The truth is that the men whom Pope satirized were so far from being silenced that for no short time they were louder and more obstreperous than ever. This fact will come out very distinctly in the detailed story of the Shakespeare controversy. At no period in his career, indeed, were his assailants more active and

[1] Dunciad of 1729, 2d edition, Book 2, l. 130; in modern editions, line 138.

[2] Quarto, 1729, Book 2, l. 130; in modern editions, note to line 299 of Book 2.

defiant, and in one sense more successful, than during the three or four years following the publication of 'The Dunciad.' They had no hesitation in returning railing for railing and abuse for abuse. Everything that was discreditable in Pope's career was sedulously raked up from the obscurity into which it had fallen by lapse of time, and was paraded afresh before the public. Everything that was doubtful had put upon it the worst possible construction. The mere recital of the works which came out in 1728 subsequent to the publication of 'The Dunciad' more than exhibits the absurdity of the statement that that satire crushed his opponents: the spirit displayed in them is as defiant and uncompromising as if he were the most contemptible of adversaries.

The epigrams and articles with which the newspaper press abounded may be neglected. Some of these indeed wounded Pope exceedingly; for they dwelt, at times with wit as well as bitterness, upon his personal deformities. Nor need we consider certain petty pieces which appeared without name and were too drearily stupid to excite apparently even the poet's natural curiosity as to their possible authorship. Furthermore, let us disregard the volumes containing several pieces, all of them designed to hold him up to contempt, such as 'The Popiad' which appeared in July, and 'The Female Dunciad' which followed the month after. These latter were essentially miscellanies devoted to attacks upon the poet, and for them authors were not so much responsible as publishers. Here we may confine our attention to the replies of that year whose author-

ship was openly avowed or was speedily ascertained. The appearance of 'The Dunciad' in May was followed by the 'Sawney' of Ralph in June; in July by 'Remarks on the Rape of the Lock' by Dennis, which, written long before, had been withheld from publication; further, in the same month by 'The Metamorphosis' of Dean Smedley, showing the change of Scriblérus into Snarlérus; in August, by this last writer's 'Alexandriana,' in which he appended an attack upon Pope to an attack upon Swift, and by 'A Supplement to the Profund,' which was attributed by the poet to Concanen; and in December by the 'Durgen' of Ward. Some of these were wretched productions; others were sufficiently vituperative to have a certain interest; but none of their writers had been awed by the prospect of annihilation, and there was clearly no difficulty in securing the publication of the poorest of them.

As a matter of fact, the assumed havoc wrought by Pope with the repute of contemporary writers is entirely the creation of literary history. It has arisen from attributing to the period of the appearance of 'The Dunciad' the feelings and beliefs which came to prevail much later. At the time itself his satire did not affect materially their prospects or fortunes. There is no question that a large and powerful body of the public sympathized at the outset with the men he had assailed, and applauded the bitterest abuse heaped by them in return upon the poet. In this class too, were included some who were genuine admirers of his works, though not of his conduct. While they might be delighted with the keenness and wit of his satire, they were not favorably

impressed with his spirit. Unquestionably, Pope had not only a large but a steadily increasing body of partisans who were disposed to accept with unswerving loyalty his favorable or unfavorable estimate of those of whom he spoke. But there was also a body of men who for various reasons had a poor opinion of the poet, and disliked and distrusted him. Nor were they by any means limited in number or in influence. Pope himself, while not disposed to underrate the dread he inspired, was conscious of the futility of his efforts against those for whom he had the extremest aversion. "Whom have I hurt?" he said in a later production:

> "Has poet yet or peer
> Lost the arched eyebrow or Parnassian sneer?"

In fact, the epithet of "dunce" was flung about with too much recklessness during the eighteenth century to carry much weight with the general public. The term was employed by every writer to designate every other writer who for any reason had not found favor in his eyes. Fielding had the good fortune to escape the appellation from Pope; but this did not save him from being at one time joined by Swift with the men whom his friend had satirized in 'The Dunciad.'

There lingers still, though it no longer flourishes, a third myth connected with 'The Dunciad.' It was once widely, almost universally believed; but fuller knowledge of the poet and his times has been attended with consequent loss of faith. Yet though shorn of its ancient vitality, it colors to some extent the expression of the views, if not the views themselves, of those who affect to reject it. The myth concerns the origin of 'The

Dunciad.' Its own origin is due to Pope himself. With a confidence in the gullibility of mankind which has been amply justified, he was considerate enough to formulate for the benefit of his fellow-countrymen a theory to account for the creation of his satire. It represented him as having been led by the noblest motives to engage in the preparation of the work. It was from a desire to free society from the ravages of abusive and scurrilous scribblers who, relying for impunity upon their own obscurity and insignificance, had been in the habit of aspersing all the great characters of the age.

This theory first found its way to the light under the sponsorship of Savage. The name of that convenient tool was signed at the outset to the authorized account of the origin of 'The Dunciad.' Subsequently, Pope reclaimed it and made it wholly his own by incorporating it into later editions of the satire in the shape of a note to the original preface. There it followed the account he furnished of the clamor aroused by his innocently putting down, in his treatise on 'The Bathos,' capital letters almost at random, which, singularly enough, happened to be the initials of certain authors. The abusive falsehoods and scurrilities to which this accidental coincidence gave rise suggested the action he had taken, as well as afforded for it ample justification. 'The Dunciad,' according to this theory, owed its origin to the license of the press which had prevailed during the two months — extended now to more than half a year — that had elapsed since the publication of the third volume of the 'Miscellanies.' "This gave Mr. Pope the thought,"

ran the account, "that he had now some opportunity of doing good by detecting and dragging into light these common enemies of mankind; since to invalidate this universal slander, it sufficed to show what contemptible men were the authors of it. He was not without hopes that by manifesting the dulness of those who had only malice to recommend them, either the booksellers would not find their account in employing them, or the men themselves, when discovered, want courage to proceed in so unlawful an occupation. This it was that gave birth to the *Dunciad*, and he thought it an happiness that by the late flood of slander on himself he had acquired such a peculiar right over their names as was necessary to this design."[1]

Nobody who has read the account already given of the circumstances under which the satire was originally published needs to be told that it required peculiar impudence at that day to attempt to palm off upon the public a falsehood so transparent, just as it would require at the present day peculiar ignorance to regard it as true. Still, though it did not impose upon the intelligent men of his own time, it came to impose upon both the intelligent and unintelligent of later times. His contemporaries recognized fully that it was nothing but Theobald's review of his edition of Shakespeare that led Pope to complete the poem he had long been contemplating, and to change the character of what had already been prepared. The poet's adversaries naturally had no hesitation in proclaiming this view in the plain-

[1] Appendix to undated duodecimo edition of 'The Dunciad' (1734), p. 232.

est terms. They may have been often wrong in details; but their statements about the central motive can be trusted. In Ralph's poem of 'Sawney,' Pope is represented as having been brought to the greatest distress of mind on account of Theobald's criticism. Finally he is encouraged and induced by Shameless — which is here the designation of Swift — to revenge himself by making its author the subject of a lampoon. "The hero of his farce," wrote another, "was the man who had incurred his vengeance by doing justice to poor Shakespeare over him."

Pope himself furnished directly or indirectly the evidence which shows conclusively that it was Theobald's criticism of his edition of Shakespeare which occasioned the production of 'The Dunciad.' He gave in his appendix a list of eighteen books in prose and verse in which he had been abused before the publication of that satire. They were the ostensible reasons for its composition. Of these eighteen three had come out after the attacks he had made upon various authors in his treatise on 'The Bathos'; and so far as they referred to him had been occasioned by it. A fourth — the criticism of Dennis on 'The Rape of the Lock' — followed 'The Dunciad,' and, though written many years before, would doubtless never have been printed had it not been for the appearance of that work. The latest date which can be found for twelve of the remaining fourteen is 1717. This interval of nearly a dozen years was sufficiently long to have caused them to be forgotten by every one but Pope himself. Not even a newspaper attack is specified by him before the publication of the first two

volumes of 'Miscellanies,' and but a single one before the publication of the third. Of the books, there are but two left upon which he could base any pretext for his belated outburst of indignation. One was Cooke's three-years-old poem entitled 'The Battle of the Poets.' The other was Mrs. Haywood's 'Memoirs of Lilliput,' which did not refer to him personally but satirized the political views of his friends.

The one work which Pope did not venture to include in his list of attacks upon himself before the publication of 'The Dunciad' was the one work which caused that satire to be written. That, however, he was shut out from specifying. He could not pretend that Theobald's criticism of his edition of Shakespeare partook of the nature of a personal attack. There were in consequence but two ways in which he could drag his name into the collection of 'Testimonies of Authors' who had assailed him, which he prefixed to his satire as justification for the retaliatory measures he had taken. Both of these he employed, but for neither had he the slightest warrant. He ascribed to Theobald passages from pieces which there is no evidence whatever that he wrote, and almost convincing evidence that he did not write. This was one method; the other was not much unlike. He garbled what had actually been written and perverted its sense.

There is accordingly no escape from the conclusion that 'The Dunciad' owed its existence to the revelation which had been given of Pope's incapacity as an editor, and to that alone. Had there been no such criticism, the satire would either never have appeared at all, or if it had appeared, it would have been of a character es-

sentially different. It would likely have corresponded closely to what was implied by its first contemplated title, 'The Progress of Dulness.' This would have harmonized with the line of thought found in the third book. Constituted as Pope was, he could not and he would not have refrained from introducing attacks upon his enemies or supposed enemies; but it was the bitter feeling aroused by Theobald's criticism which converted what would have been a general satire, with personal reflections upon individuals, into a personal satire in which the general subject of the progress of dulness faded into the background.

The criticism of his edition of Shakespeare was not the only offence of which Theobald had been guilty. He was on friendly terms with men whom the poet disliked and either despised or pretended to despise. In his discussion of the text of Shakespeare he had spoken in the highest terms of the knowledge of that author possessed by Dennis. To James Moore-Smythe's play of 'The Rival Modes' he had furnished a prologue. To Cooke's translation of Hesiod he had contributed notes. Such consorting with the men Pope deemed his own assailants or enemies aggravated his main offence and increased the poet's bitterness towards the offender. Had he furnished no other pretext, it would have been of itself a sufficient ground for enrolling him among the objects of his satire, though not of constituting him its hero. For Pope's ideas of vengeance extended not merely to the men he detested, but to all who had with them any friendly dealings. His conduct was modelled upon the instructions given by Samuel to Saul as to the

course to be followed with the Amalekites. Not only was Agag to be slain, but all his people; not only man and woman, infant, and suckling, but ox and sheep and camel and ass.

Theobald's connection with one of the men above-mentioned furnishes a striking illustration of the way in which Pope was in the habit of misrepresenting the action of those he desired to injure. Misrepresentation is, perhaps, too mild a word to characterize the course he pursued. Cooke, in a postscript at the close of his translation of Hesiod[1] expressed his gratitude to Theobald, in particular, for the assistance he had rendered. He had further said that whatever remarks he had received from any of his friends, he had carefully distinguished from his own "as a matter of justice to those by whom he had been obliged." In accordance with this practice he had in some instances pointed out that certain notes or parts of certain notes were not his own, but had been furnished him by Theobald. Pope chose to represent this action as having been taken not by Cooke himself, but by the man to whom Cooke had professed obligation. He spoke of Theobald's contribution to the version of Hesiod, "where," he said, "sometimes a note and sometimes even half a note are carefully owned by him."[2] It is acts of this sort that account for the low estimation in which the poet was held even by many among his contemporaries who recognized fully the greatness of his genius.

[1] Cooke's Hesiod, vol. ii. p. 196.

[2] Note to Book 1, line 168, quarto of 1729, and later. It is not found in modern editions.

The reason for making Theobald the hero of his satire was so well understood at the time that Pope himself came speedily to have an uneasy consciousness that the choice would react upon his own repute by calling renewed attention to the criticism his work as an editor had sustained. It did not take him long to comprehend that he was putting himself in an unfortunate position by laying special stress upon the volume which had exposed his shortcomings. In the very first edition of 'The Dunciad,' part of the opening line read as follows:

"Book and the man I sing."

The book was 'Shakespeare Restored.' No sooner, however, had the satire appeared than he recognized the desirability of withdrawing from the notice of men the real motive which had led him to make Theobald its hero. This consideration involved consequently the withdrawal from readers of the slightest incentive to examine the volume which had roused his resentment. Accordingly, in the next and all subsequent editions 'Books' took the place of 'Book.' Here modern bibliography has obligingly come to Pope's aid, and assures us that the very first word of the poem — the one word which above all others would be certain never to escape the notice of author, type-setter, proof-reader, and reviser — is nothing but an error of the press which passed unheeded and uncorrected by them all.

In truth, as time went on, Pope half apologized for his action. As it would not have done to give the real reason, he tried to explain the selection on various grounds. All were pretty lame; but the world has never cared enough about the matter to examine either

their justice or their sufficiency. On one occasion he observed that Theobald was made the hero of the satire, just as Eusden had been made poet-laureate, "because there was no better to be had." [1] As this was not altogether satisfactory, he gave as another reason that his critic had concealed his design of reviewing the edition of Shakespeare, while at the very time soliciting from him favors; and then, it was implied, had joined in the outcry raised against Pope that he had been concerned with the publisher in the extravagant subscription which had been demanded. "Probably," he went on to say, "that proceeding elevated him to the dignity he holds in this poem, which he seems to deserve no other way better than his brethren; unless we impute it to the share he had in the journals cited among the testimonies of authors prefixed to this work." [2]

Pope, in truth, practically laid aside, in his notes and in the appendix to the poem, any pretence that he was actuated by any other than personal motives. It was the attitude of men towards himself that dictated the insertion or non-insertion of their names. The ability or lack of ability they had displayed did not come into the question at all. It requires biographic zeal of peculiar magnitude and blindness to see in Pope's conduct as contrasted with his professions anything but the ebullition

[1] Note to line 319 of Book 3, quarto of 1729; transferred to line 102 of Book 1, in the Gilliver octavo of 1729 and later editions. Not in modern editions.

[2] Note to line 106 of Book 1, quarto of 1729; same with additions — especially about Theobald having been concerned in the outcry against Pope about the Shakespeare subscription — in the Gilliver octavo of 1729 and later editions. Not in modern editions.

of private spite masking itself under the guise of public virtue. Naturally he was occasionally misled. He sometimes mistook friends for enemies or attacked men who had given him no cause of offence. The wantonness indeed with which reputations were assailed is made very marked by the fact that in the original edition of his satire he enrolled in his list of dunces the hymn-writer, Isaac Watts, and the rector of Epworth, Samuel Wesley, the father of two far more famous sons. In the complete edition which followed he had the grace to withdraw these names with an apology for their insertion; but the fact that they appeared at all illustrates the reckless spirit with which the composition of the work was undertaken.

It must not be assumed that for writing 'The Dunciad' Pope had not received provocation. During his whole career, but especially during the earlier part of it, he had been subjected to dull criticism, to malignant criticism, and to criticism which was both malignant and dull. Stupid men had not liked his brilliancy. Envious men had been hurt by his success. He had had to encounter not merely gross abuse, but the studied depreciation which consists in half-hearted appreciation, and which he himself has so happily characterized as damning with faint praise. He had been subjected to all that sort of perfunctory reviewing which is the regular resource of third-rate critics. If he did one thing, it was suggested that he might better have done something else. Everything he had said had been said before, usually by some obscure person known only to the critic himself. Any particular thing he fancied he had

discovered or had for the first time clearly set forth, he had been assured was well known to everybody, only nobody had thought it worth while to communicate to the public what was so generally accessible. In particular, a not uncommon charge against an author whose meaning often suffered from conciseness was that he was altogether too diffuse. Innumerable details could have been spared to the great advantage of the piece. All these cheap critical commonplaces so favored of the dull or of those ignorant of the subject had been bestowed in abundance upon Pope's early productions by men who had taken them up with the determined resolution to be dissatisfied, and if they could not find faults would create out of their own imaginations faults which the poet had missed making.

All this is true. But Pope's fortune in this respect was no different from that of any man of genius, it may almost be said of any man who has talents sufficient to raise him much above his fellows. His lot was the common lot. Circumstances there were, to be sure, peculiar to the age in which he lived. During most of his active life two kings were on the throne who lacked the literary sense as well as the moral. He personally came in contact with men of wealth and position who sought to be recognized as patrons without the ability to recognize merit or the disposition to reward it. The error which Pope made was to heed attacks for which he ought to have had no other feeling than contempt; for after all it was not so much from malignant criticism that he suffered as from the dulness that is due to the sheer lack of ability to appreciate. No great author has

ever escaped it. No great author ever will. Resentment of attack is of course an error easier to point out than avoid committing. Still, it was ignoble in Pope to enter into a contest with his decriers. It reduced him to the level of the men by whom he had been assailed. But far more ignoble it was to resort to practices from which he professed to have constantly suffered himself; to seek revenge for wounded vanity by a systematic course of prevarication, of misrepresentation, and too often of direct falsification.

CHAPTER XV

SHAKESPEARE CONTROVERSY OF 1728

If the treatise on 'The Bathos' did not really excite the clamor which it suited Pope's purposes to pretend it did, and which it is still said to have produced, no such failure attended the publication of 'The Dunciad' two months later. This both gratified the scandal-loving public and aroused to the highest pitch the resentment of those it attacked. Replies of all sorts were made to it. They were marked by the malevolence displayed in the satire itself, but very rarely by anything remotely approaching its ability. In them neither Pope's person was spared nor his morals. It might have seemed ungenerous to taunt him for defects for which nature alone was responsible, had not his own example given his intellectual inferiors ample excuse as well as provocation to assail him for crookedness of body as well as of mind.

Yet even the extent to which resentment manifested itself publicly has been constantly overstated. A remarkable thing connected with 'The Dunciad' is not the number of those who were vociferous in repelling the attack made upon themselves, but the number of these who kept silence. Many, to be sure, were dead, and could not reply. Some among the living — such as Eusden and Blackmore — were approaching death, and

were in no situation to reply, even had they possessed the desire. Ambrose Philips was in Ireland, and though he outlived Pope many years seems never to have taken any notice, at least any public notice, of the assaults made upon him and his writings either in the prose miscellany or in the poem. This indeed is true of him throughout his whole career. Constantly pursued by Pope with virulence, the only retaliation he is ever reported to have adopted or threatened is the one act of hanging up a rod at Button's to indicate the nature of the chastisement which awaited the poet on his appearance there; and this exhibits rather the mark of a jest or of an intent to play upon his critic's fears than the indication of any serious purpose. But among those attacked in the 'Miscellanies' or 'The Dunciad' were several who were still in the full maturity of their powers. Up to the issue of the complete edition of the poem, with notes, many of those satirized — such as Welsted, Moore-Smythe and Cooke — preserved silence. Several others — like Defoe, Colley Cibber, Aaron Hill, Hearne, and Budgel — preserved silence always, so far at least as the public was concerned. The most noise was made in fact by the least injured.

The failure of some of these to reply, whether due to dislike of controversy, or to the consciousness of the absurdity of the charge, or to the lack of sensitiveness to attack, or to the dread of further attack, occasioned in many quarters a good deal of surprise. This was particularly the case after the quarto of 1729 with its intensely personal notes made its appearance. Not unnaturally Warburton was unable to understand a course

of conduct so repugnant to his own methods of procedure. He so expressed himself to Theobald. "I am as much surprised as you," replied the latter,[1] "at the silence of some whom we take to be injured." Yet in the number of these was included the writer of the letter himself, the one man against whom the full fury of the satire had been directed. In none of the elaborate replies made to the original 'Dunciad' was Theobald concerned. Scarcely even can he be said to have taken any notice of it save under compulsion. Silence in his case could hardly have been due to any dread of consequences. The worst had been said of him already that could be said. But there is little doubt that Theobald was by nature averse to these personal controversies so dear to Dennis who had now become his friend. Even if disinclination had not existed, it was policy to remain silent. He could not have been but well aware of the hopeless disadvantage under which he would labor in a contest of wit with the most brilliant genius of the age. There was one way in which he was conscious that he could exhibit a superiority which would be generally recognized; and to this sort of reply he purposed to limit himself. One result of the publication of 'The Dunciad' was doubtless to spur him to put forth still more strenuous exertions for the rectification of the text of Shakespeare. The good or ill success of the work to which he had now devoted himself would, he felt assured, either condemn or justify the attack made upon him by the poet.

Attention has been called to the fact that Theobald's method of dealing with the text of Shakespeare had pro-

[1] Letter of October 25, 1729, Nichols, vol. ii. p. 248.

foundly impressed his contemporaries. English scholarship indeed, as we understand it, did not exist at the time. Still, there were men living then who were capable of recognizing what had been done to rescue the work of the great dramatist from the state of unintelligibility in which a good deal of it had been left by the carelessness of printers, or into which it had been brought by the ignorance or indolence of editors. Regret, as we have seen, had been expressed from the moment of the appearance of his criticism that he had not been the one selected to supervise and establish the correct text. That opportunity, it was thought, had now passed. There prevailed a belief at that time, or rather an impression, that a monopoly of printing the plays of Shakespeare had accrued to the Tonsons. From that publishing house had proceeded the editions of Rowe and Pope. By many it was looked upon as having secured by this action the sole right of printing the text, at all events the text as amended. Accordingly the next best thing was to publish commentaries and corrections. To this sort of work Theobald was urged to devote himself. A general desire was displayed, amounting almost to a demand, that he should carry through the task he had already begun. The feeling widely existed that he should not confine his attention, as before, to single passages or even single plays, but he should make a full critical examination of all the plays.

Theobald undoubtedly needed little urging. The work was of a sort in which his tastes and inclinations lay. For it too he must have been aware that he was

far better fitted than any man of his time. The fact was indeed so generally recognized that others who had the emendation of the text in mind abandoned their plans and in some instances lent their aid. Still it was not till 1728 that the project appears to have taken definite shape. The play of 'Double Falsehood' had been published late in December, 1727. Early in the following year came out a second edition. In that, Theobald added a passage to the original preface announcing his intention. "I am honored," he said, "with so many powerful solicitations pressing me to the prosecution of an attempt which I have begun with some little success, of restoring Shakespeare from the numerous corruptions of his text, that I can neither in gratitude nor good manners longer resist them. I therefore think it not amiss here to promise that tho' private property should so far stand in my way as to prevent me from putting out an edition of Shakespeare, yet some way or other, if I live, the public shall receive from my hand his whole works corrected, with my best care and ability." It is evident from his words that at that time Theobald deemed himself barred from any attempt to bring out an edition of the text. In consequence his intention was to publish a complete series of emendations of all the plays after the manner of the work he had done in 'Shakespeare Restored.'

A project of this sort was one upon which Pope could not be expected to look with favorable eyes. The wound inflicted upon his self-love still rankled as much as ever, if not even more. He knew well that in the eyes of men Theobald's criticism of the way he had

performed his task of editing appeared fully justified. Additional exposure of his incapacity would be particularly galling at a time when a second and cheaper edition of his Shakespeare was going through the press and would soon be put upon the market. It was his interest, and it soon became an object at which he steadily aimed, to underrate the results Theobald had reached, to decry his methods, to give the impression that his corrections, while good enough as far as they went, did not after all go very far, and were in fact little more than the fruits of protracted and stupid industry. The fuller revenge for the criticism which had inflicted this unexpected blow upon his repute had been already prepared, and was waiting only for a sufficient pretext to be put forth. But before that made its appearance he had set out to convey the idea that Theobald's correction of the text dealt only with matters of minor importance, trivial points, details of punctuation, and generally with things of little moment.

The prose attack made in the treatise on 'The Bathos' has already been given. But in this third volume of 'Miscellanies' — called on its title-page "the last" [1] — appeared certain verses with the heading 'Fragment of a Satire.' Pope's attack upon Addison had been first printed in a collection of pieces which came out in 1723 under the title of 'Cythereia; or New Poems upon Love and Intrigue.' It was styled in that work 'Verses occasioned by Mr. Tickell's Translation of the

[1] The volume of the 'Miscellanies' called "the third" on its title-page appeared in 1732. The 'Daily Journal' of October 5 announces it as "first published this day."

first Iliad of Homer.'[1] It was followed in the same volume by an answer from a certain John Markland, and the following passage, infinitely inferior as it is to any part of Pope's brilliant characterization, gives some conception of the view which prevailed largely as to his relations with Addison:

> "So the skilled snarler pens his angry lines,
> Grins lowly fawning, biting as he whines;
> Traducing with false friendship's formal face,
> And scandalizing with the mouth of praise."

The title-page of this collection of poems showed that it came from the establishments of Curll and of Payne. It is by no means unlikely that Pope had contrived to have the satire conveyed into the hands of the former publisher, just as he did later his letters; for Curll was a man whom Pope took care to use occasionally as well as to abuse regularly.

The satire upon Addison was now for the first time printed in a volume authorized by the poet himself. But to it were added attacks upon others; and the whole fragment was subsequently embodied by him in his 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.' There we have it in its improved and perfected form; and whatever may be thought of its justice, too much cannot be said in praise of its point, its vigor, and its brilliancy. The paragraph which contained the first attack upon Theobald follows here as originally printed:

> "Should some more sober critics come abroad,
> If wrong, I smile; if right, I kiss the rod.

[1] Cythereia, p. 90, No. XII.

Pains, reading, study are their just pretence,
And all they want is spirit, taste and sense.
Commas and points they set exactly right;
And 't were a sin to rob them of their mite.
In future ages how their fame will spread
For routing triplets and restoring *ed*.
Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel graced these ribalds,
From sanguine Sew— down to piddling T—s,
Who thinks he reads when he but scans and spells,
A word-catcher that lives on syllables.
Yet ev'n this creature may some notice claim,
Wrapt round and sanctified with Shakespear's name;
Pretty, in amber to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs or worms;
The thing, we know, is neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil it got there."

No merely scholastic reputation could hold its own against lines so stinging as these. Later much of this passage was changed for the better. In the revised form in which we are now familiar with it, the couplet containing the remarks on routing triplets and restoring *ed* was omitted. For whomsoever it may have been designed, it had nothing to do with Theobald, who had never been concerned in anything of the kind. But the epithet "piddling" was retained, and it clung to him. The addition of an *-s* to his name was a necessity imposed by the ryme, and the word selected for the ryme had here neither sense nor appropriateness. Yet such is the influence of a great writer that this way of spelling the commentator's name was henceforward adopted by many.

The lines just given were put forward as the precursors of the more crushing attack which was now

ready to come out and soon came. A short time, however, after the appearance of 'The Dunciad,' there was printed in 'Mist's Journal' a communication about it which excited Pope's indignation to a high degree. It was dated from Gray's Inn the 29th of May, and was signed W. A.[1] These letters chanced to be the initials of the name of a somewhat noted political writer of the period, William Arnall, a man of no mean abilities. He had had nothing to do with the composition of the piece, and in all probability was entirely ignorant of its origin. But he knew enough of Pope to be well aware that unless he cleared himself from all complicity with its production he would have directed against him the hostility of the greatest genius and most popular writer of the day. He took pains, therefore, to disavow the authorship of the letter signed with his initials and to disclaim any connection with it whatever. His statement, of which there is no reason to doubt the truth, was accepted by the poet. It may be added, however, that he gained nothing in the long run by being spared on this occasion. He still continued to write articles in favor of Walpole and against Bolingbroke and the so-called party of patriots. Pope's patience gave way at last at what he chose to call Arnall's "most unexampled insolence, impudent billingsgate language and personal abuse of several great men, the poet's particular friends."[2] Accordingly in later editions he was given a place in 'The Dunciad,' and in the opinion of Pope's biographers became in consequence a dunce.

[1] 'Mist's Journal,' June 8, 1728.

[2] Dunciad, note to line 293 of Book 2, edition of 1735. In edition of 1743, note to line 315, with some omissions and other changes.

This letter signed W. A. was somewhat softened by the editor of 'Mist's Journal,' as he himself tells us. But as it was, Pope resented it bitterly. It gave an account of his relations with Addison and charged him with heaping flattery upon that author while he was living; but as soon as he was dead, it added, he "libelled the memory of his departed friend, traduced him in a sharp invective, and what was still more heinous, he made the scandal public." Then followed an account of the reasons which had led to the production of the just published poem, the most irritating feature of which was its truth. Reference was made to the lines in the 'Miscellany' satirizing Theobald, and the further attack upon him in 'The Dunciad.' These, it was said, had been written by Pope "to express his indignation at the man who had supplied his defects without his reward, and faithfully performed what himself undertook and ought to have discharged." To what had been accomplished by the commentator the article gave the highest praise. One passage in particular there was in this letter expressing an opinion about 'Shakespeare Restored' which Pope, as we shall see, was speedily to join with another written by the author of that treatise and manipulate to suit his own purposes.

No one knows now who wrote the letter signed W. A.; nor did Pope know then. The secret of the identity of the author was well kept. As there was no one man upon whom the poet could fix with certainty, he chose to ascribe the composition of this piece to a cabal. In the appendix to the quarto of 1729 he attributed it to

"Dennis, Theobald, and others."[1] By the time the Gilliver octavo appeared, knowledge of the real authorship had not, to be sure, increased, but the invention of writers and circumstances had. Pope created an association of men who met together weekly to assail him. By some one of this band it was concocted, though he did not know by whom. "It was writ," he said, "by some or other of the club of Theobald, Dennis, Moore, Concanen, Cooke, who for some time held constant weekly meetings for these kind of performances." This is a statement repeated in all editions of 'The Dunciad' down to the present day. The association of men who met regularly to assail Pope and his writings plays an important part in the accounts given of the satire. It is treated with as much seriousness as if there were no doubt of its having had an actual existence. It is a club which owed its existence to the poet's creative imagination. Outside of what was said by Pope in the passage just quoted there is not a contemporary allusion to it elsewhere, nor a scintilla of evidence anywhere to suggest its reality.

If internal evidence is of any value one thing is certain. Whoever wrote the letter signed W. A., Theobald did not. Not only is it unlike his manner, it contained remarks to which he would never have himself given utterance. That it was written by some one friendly to him is probable; not impossibly by a personal friend. Of this, however, there can be no assurance; for any one and every one hostile to Pope would almost inevitably resort to so fertile a source of irritation to the poet as praise of his critic. But it was clearly written by one

[1] Dunciad, quarto of 1729, p. 94.

who knew the facts. The account of the origin of 'The Dunciad' naturally varied a good deal from that which Pope took care later to give, and which for a long time it became the fashion to repeat. Here the true source was distinctly indicated as being the criticism of his edition in 'Shakespeare Restored.' "It being impracticable," went on the letter-writer, "to expose any errors in that work, he was extravagantly witty on some earlier productions of his antagonist."

Wherever there was an end of his own to be served, Pope was always capable of adjusting the facts to the requirements of the situation. In the appendix to 'The Dunciad' we have seen that he attributed W. A.'s letter to one or more of several authors. In the body of the work, however, he ascribed it to one alone. This was Theobald himself. In the notes he introduced a quotation from it as if there were not the least doubt of that fact.[1] The apparent ground for imputing its composition to Theobald was the high commendation it gave to his work on Shakespeare. As this was a method of self-criticism to which Pope was himself specially addicted, it is not particularly surprising that he should attribute the same practice to his opponent. But there was another reason for the bitterness he felt. Besides this letter which Theobald surely did not write, there was one which he surely did. To it his name was appended. It is that already described as containing the defence against the criticism, put forth in the treatise on 'The Bathos,' of certain expressions found in 'Double Falsehood.' In this

[1] Note in quarto of 1729 to line 106 of Book 1. In modern editions, where the falsification is much graver, the note is attached to line 133.

letter he had taken no notice of the personal attacks upon himself both in the prose and poetry of the last volume of 'Miscellanies.' There was nothing indeed in his communication which betrayed the existence of any special sensitiveness to what had been said about himself; in fact the tone throughout may be called good-natured.

But Theobald had been rudely awakened from the belief that he was to find in Pope the generous antagonist he had pictured in his treatise, delighted to have the text of Shakespeare benefited, even if errors made by himself were pointed out. He therefore felt under no obligation to spare his adversary's sensibilities. During the preceding two years he had not been idle. Much, he believed, had been accomplished by him in establishing a correct text of Shakespeare; though he evidently had no conception of how much more remained to be accomplished. He was now maturing a scheme to publish the results of his studies; and in this letter of April 27 he exhibited no hesitation about declaring his intention of following up his previous criticism. This declaration could not of itself have been agreeable to the poet; but it was made more offensive by the way in which it was announced. His own second edition of Shakespeare was to come out in the course of the year; then his performance would be subject to a new examination. "If Mr. Pope," Theobald wrote, in conclusion, "is angry with me for attempting to restore Shakespeare, I hope the public are not. Admit my sheets have no other merit, they will at least have this: They will awaken him to some degree of accuracy in his next edition of that poet which we are to

have in a few months; and then we shall see whether he owed the errors of the former edition to indiligence or to inexperience in the author. And as my remarks upon the whole works of Shakespeare shall closely attend upon the publication of his edition, I'll venture to promise without arrogance that I'll then give above five hundred more fair emendations that shall escape him and all his assistants."

There was a threat in these final words which Pope never forgot or forgave. A rod had been held up over his head. The consciousness possessed by Theobald of his own superiority in textual criticism had led him to give to this announcement a tone almost of patronage. Whether it was wise or unwise to say what he did, the confidence expressed was due to his full acquaintance with Pope's methods of editing. How deeply these words galled the poet can be seen from the way he subsequently tortured them to convey a meaning entirely different from what they had expressed. Indeed, no more instructive example can be furnished of the devices resorted to by Pope to misrepresent both the words and the character of his critic. He remembered to quote this passage or something like it, in the editions of 'The Dunciad' of 1729, and those which followed. He remembered to misquote it in the edition of 1743. The changes it underwent at different times present a striking picture of the varieties of falsification which Pope could manage to exhibit in a small compass.

When the extract from 'Mist's Journal' appeared in a note to the quarto of 1729, the letter itself was still reasonably fresh in memory, and was readily accessible

to any one who sought to ascertain for himself the exact words. Pope's representation of it did not consequently vary materially from what Theobald had written. In the note containing it he joined to it the remark just cited from W. A.'s letter concerning 'Shakespeare Restored.' It was with the following account of Theobald that he introduced it. "What is still in memory," wrote Pope, "is a piece now about a year old; it had the arrogant title of 'Shakespear Restored.' Of this he was so proud himself as to say in one of 'Mist's Journals,' June 8, 'That to expose any errors in it was impracticable.' And in another, April 27, 'That whatever care for the future might be taken either by Mr. P. or any other assistants, he would still give above five hundred emendations that *shall* escape them *all*.'"[1]

There is a certain popular prejudice — from which in justice to Pope here it must be said that he was everywhere invariably exempt — in favor of giving an author's exact words when extracts from his writings are enclosed between quotation marks. To say nothing of ascribing to Theobald an assertion about his 'Shakespeare Restored' which had never come from him at all, the variations between what he actually wrote in his letter and what he was represented as having written, though somewhat trivial, are sufficient to give a misleading impression. Especially is this caused by the insertion of the words "whatever care for the future might be taken." Still, for Pope this was a reasonably

[1] Dunciad, quarto of 1729. Note to line 106 of Book I. The note in this form is not in modern editions; in its changed form it is attached to line 133.

accurate quotation. At that period it was not safe to go any farther. Accordingly the note as here quoted continued essentially unchanged for a number of years — in truth until the edition of 1743. Lapse of time then enabled Pope to subject the facts to a more satisfactory rearrangement. Men had forgotten them; the means of verifying them practically existed no longer. The observation contained in W. A.'s letter that it was impracticable to point out any errors in 'Shakespeare Restored' was now extended. That it should continue to be imputed to Theobald was what might have been expected. But it now appeared as having been said by him, not of this particular critical treatise, but of his edition of Shakespeare, which it is needless to remark, was so far from being in existence when W. A.'s letter appeared that it was not then even contemplated.

This did fairly well as a falsification of something which, though not written by Theobald, was ascribed to him. But it was equalled, if not surpassed, by the further falsification of something which he had written. The promise which he had made that he could give above five hundred fair emendations of the text which would escape the attention of Pope in his forthcoming edition and of all his assistants, was no longer confined to that work. It was extended to all editions yet to be brought out by any one whomsoever. Theobald is reported as having asserted "that whatever care might for the future be taken by any other editor he would still give above five hundred emendations that *shall* escape them all."[1] This statement must have met with the implied

[1] Dunciad, quarto of 1743 and later editions, note to Book 1, line 133.

if not the express sanction of Warburton, who could not well have managed, by straining forgetfulness to the utmost, to be unaware of its utter falsity. That divine was careful to retain what he could not help knowing to be a lie in the edition of 'The Dunciad' which he published in 1749. It is upon this and similar flagrant perversions of the facts — for while many must be left unrecorded, there are others yet to be given — that the estimate taken of Theobald came to be founded. The note just given, with its glaring falsehood, has remained unchanged and unchallenged in every edition of the poet's works from his day to our own. It is one of several forgeries which have been made the basis for imputing to Theobald vanity, self-sufficiency, and arrogance. It was more than once cited by later writers as giving a true picture of his character and state of mind.

Theobald, while never making a formal reply to 'The Dunciad,' incidentally took notice of one or two false statements made about himself in that satire. On June 22 he published in 'Mist's Journal' his proposals for printing by subscription notes and remarks critical and explanatory on the comedies, histories, and tragedies of Shakespeare. One gets from his words the impression that he had as yet no conception of the magnitude of the task he had set before himself. In the proposals a definite declaration was made that the corruptions of all the former editions would be removed; the text would be amended in above a thousand places; the pointing would be rectified so as to render clear a number of passages previously absurd and unintelligible; and finally that obsolete and difficult words and obscure places would

be explained. The work was to be printed in three octavo volumes at the price of a guinea, and to be delivered to subscribers the first day of the coming December. It was further announced that the whole copy was ready for the press. This statement, if precisely true, is conclusive proof that the undertaking, so far completed, corresponded but little with the design he came speedily to entertain.

In the communication to 'Mist's Journal' accompanying these proposals Theobald called attention to one specific falsehood about himself expressed or rather implied in 'The Dunciad.' He seems to have referred to it because it was distinctly calculated to interfere with the success of his efforts in gaining subscribers. This method of publication had now come to be overdone. Any pretext, however flimsy, was consequently seized upon by the unwilling victim to free himself from the importunities of writers. It is evident from a number of passages in his letter that Theobald was now beginning to realize what it meant to come into conflict with the most influential author of the age, who was at the same time the most unscrupulous. Pope had represented his critic as deciding to give himself up to party writing, which then and long afterward among the English was considered a pursuit distinctly unbefitting a gentleman. He was depicted as having cast aside his Flaccus — a possible allusion to the once contemplated version of Horace — and deliberating whether he should resume his ancient profession of attorney,

> "Or rob the Roman geese of all their glories,
> And save the state by cackling to the Tories?

Yes, to my country I my pen consign,
Yes, from this moment, mighty Mist! am thine." [1]

There was a manifest intention to insinuate here that Theobald was writing political articles in the most extreme Tory organ of the time. It was not a light charge to make against a comparatively obscure scholar in those days of Whig domination. The mere report could not fail to be harmful; for ridiculously false as it would seem to those who knew the facts, the number of these would be necessarily limited. Theobald was accordingly fully justified in the indignation he expressed at a falsehood so purposely malicious. He had never meddled in political matters. As he said himself, he had never had any inclination that way. Both his tastes and his studies lay in entirely different fields. He could have justly added that his sympathies, so far as he possessed any, were with the existing administration. Walpole indeed became one of his patrons, and to that minister his 'Orestes' was dedicated in 1730, and his 'Fatal Secret,' in 1735. Furthermore, up to the time of the publication of 'The Dunciad' but two pieces of his had appeared in 'Mist's Journal.' Neither of these had dealt at all with political questions, and one of them had not been communicated by himself.

Theobald's indignant denial of an assertion intended to injure him in his scheme of securing subscribers had not the slightest effect upon Pope's action. No one ever recognized more clearly than he the advantage of

[1] Dunciad, ed. of 1728, Book 1, lines 181–184; ed. of 1729, lines 191–194; in modern editions, lines 211–214, necessarily much changed, as it now refers to Cibber.

sticking unflinchingly to a falsehood, or followed more assiduously the practice of enlarging and strengthening it after it was once put forth. Not only were the lines left unchanged in the complete edition of 1729, but a note was added to make the insinuation conveyed by them more effective. "Nathaniel Mist," ran its words, "was publisher of a famous Tory paper, in which this author was sometimes permitted to have a part."[1] The note was intended to injure the man attacked, not to enlighten the reader, who would be as well informed about this journal as Pope himself. Theobald was fully aware at the time that there were difficulties enough in his way without being saddled with the burden of this unfounded charge. It was not merely, he said, that subscriptions had now become a heavy tax, but he was not known to the opulent and great, whose encouragement and assistance was needed in order to carry through his undertaking. "I am aware too," he added, "of no little discouragement from the slenderness of my own reputation in letters." All he could plead was that he sought to make Shakespeare intelligible to his readers, and to increase the pleasure to be derived from his writings. "Could I flatter myself," he wrote, "this performance would have a merit equal to the labor of it, I might hope to build a reputation that all Mr. Pope's attacks should not be able to pull down. But the only praise it shall have from myself is what I hope I may be allowed to give it; that as I have for many years had my author entirely at heart, my whole powers shall be bent to retrieve and explain his text."

[1] This note was omitted in the recast of 1743 and no longer appears.

In November of this year came out in eight duodecimo volumes the second edition of Pope's Shakespeare. In preparing these for the press the poet found himself in something of a dilemma. Theobald's emendations were in many cases too palpably right to be disregarded. If he neglected them he would lay himself open to the censure of the public for having allowed personal pique to stand in the way of the proper presentation of the text of his author. If he adopted them he would by that very fact confess that he had been indebted for the explanation of passages which he had failed to understand to the very man whom he had stigmatized as pre-eminently a dunce. It shows the extent of the repute which Theobald had then gained that Pope felt himself under the necessity of resorting to the latter alternative. He did it grudgingly; he tried to break the force of every admission; he underrated his critic's emendations wherever he discovered the slightest pretext. Some of the corrections he adopted in his text without specifying them in particular. At the end of the eighth volume he made a general acknowledgment of the obligations he was under, so far as he was under any obligation at all, which he implied was very little. Then he inserted several pages of Theobald's corrections under the heading of "Various readings or conjectures on passages in Shakespear." The addition to his work of this list, which was accompanied with comments of his own, furnished him the easiest way of extricating himself from an unsatisfactory position.

The prefatory remarks to the list, with all the affected depreciation displayed in it of the work of his opponent,

does not hide the mortification which his criticism had caused. "Since the publication of our first edition," wrote Pope, "there having been some attempts upon Shakespear published by Lewis Theobald (which he would not communicate during the time wherein that edition was preparing for the press, when we, by public advertisements, did request the assistance of all lovers of this author), we have inserted in this impression as many of 'em as are judged of any the least advantage to the poet; the whole amounting to about twenty-five words. But to the end every reader may judge for himself, we have annexed a complete list of the rest; which if he shall think trivial or erroneous, either in part or the whole; at worst it can spoil but a half sheet of paper that chances to be left vacant here. And we purpose, for the future, to do the same with respect to any other persons, who either thro' candor or vanity, shall communicate the least thing tending to the illustration of our author. We have here omitted nothing but pointings and mere errors of the press, which I hope the corrector of it has rectified; if not, I cou'd wish as accurate an one as Mr. Th. had been at that trouble, which I desired Mr. Tonson to solicit him to undertake."

It needed but the most cursory of examinations to discover that no really serious work had been put by Pope on this new edition. But it was at once subjected to an examination which was not cursory. It had been out only a few days when Theobald sent a letter to the 'Daily Journal' [1] commenting upon it and the remarks contained at the end of it about himself. The first sen-

[1] November 26, 1728. Theobald's letter is dated Nov. 23.

tence of these he quoted in full. He referred to his previous declaration in 'Mist's Journal' in which, before this edition came out, he had promised that he would give over five hundred fair emendations that should escape Pope and all his assistants. His friends had been disposed at the time to regard this declaration on his part as both impolitic and rash. Pope, however, he said ironically, had been too generous to take advantage of his challenge. He was therefore prepared to more than fulfil his promise. The expected edition had now made its appearance, and so far as he had been enabled to discover, contained no other corrections of previous errors than those drawn from his own treatise published two years before. According to the statement found at its end, the number of what its editor had called his critic's "attempts upon Shakespeare," that had been adopted by him, amounted to "about" twenty-five words. Any reader, Theobald affirmed, who took the pains to make the requisite examination, would find that Pope had introduced into his text from 'Shakespeare Restored' "about" a hundred of changes in expression, or changes in meaning which affected the sense. Every one now knows that the poet had grossly understated his obligations to that treatise. Still, he was doubtless prepared to parry the effect of any such charge by insisting that those above the number he gave consisted merely of pointings and errors of the press. At all events his assertion seems to have been the reason that led Theobald in the notes to his own edition, some years after, to specify the instances in which Pope had adopted the more important corrections of words and

phrases which he had himself previously proposed. They amounted to fifty-one in all.[1]

If there had been any anxiety on Theobald's part that Pope was ever likely to rival him as a commentator on Shakespeare, the appearance of this new edition dispelled any fear of the sort. "I have over and over declared," he wrote, "that no provocation from this gentleman shall break in either upon my temper or good manners; nor tempt me to reply to him with petulance or scurrility." But he clearly considered that neither temper nor good manners prevented him from expressing very positive opinions about the qualifications as an editor of the man whom, he asserted, he had once viewed with respect and admiration, and wished that he could so view him still. His characterization of the poet in that capacity was sufficiently sweeping. It was to the effect that "if want of industry in collating old copies, if want of reading proper authors to ascertain points of history, if want of knowledge of the modern tongues, want of judgment in digesting his author's own text, or want of sagacity in restoring it where it is manifestly defective, can disable any man from a title to be the editor of Shakespeare, I make no scruples to declare

[1] The following are the pages in Theobald's first edition of Shakespeare in which he specifies the adoption by Pope in his second edition of emendations which he had advanced in his 'Shakespeare Restored'; in one instance his approval merely: vol. i. pp. 67, 92, 301, 418, 428; vol. ii. pp. 6, 20, 64, 115, 273, 313, 432, 497; vol. iii. pp. 18, 39, 125, 192, 378; vol. iv. pp. 49, 65, 225, 250, 509; vol. v. pp. 12, 13, 18, 193, 243, 269, 284, 360, 426; vol. vi. pp. 19, 41, 76, 110, 216, 234, 382, 393, 405, 419, 439, 440; vol. vii. pp. 76, 90, 132, 141, 246, 257, 384. Compare also in this last volume, page 259. These, of course, are Theobald's own emendations; not his restorations, from the original editions, of the right reading which had been overlooked by Pope.

that hitherto Mr. Pope appears absolutely unequal to that task."

One of Theobald's most irritating peculiarities was his habit of proving his assertions. He set out to convict Pope of every one of the sort of errors he had enumerated. He professed that under each he could furnish plenty of examples; he would do so when his promised volumes of comment came out; but in the space allowed to a letter he had to content himself with a single illustration of the various charges. In general, it may be said that he took the ground that Pope had failed in giving the right reading, sometimes because he had not followed the old copies which he pretended to have collated, and sometimes because he had followed them. He specified as an instance of his want of industry of collation, the appearance of *fortune* for *fortress* in the speech of Octavian in 'Antony and Cleopatra';[1] of his want of reading proper authors to ascertain points of history, in his substitution of *hate* for *have* in the same play, when Sextus Pompey says to Antony, "You have my father's house;"[2] of his want of knowledge of modern languages in leaving unamended the corrupt Italian in 'Love's Labor's Lost';[3] of his want of judgment in correcting his author's text by his following the

[1] Act iii., scene 2.

[2] Act ii., scene 7.

[3] Act iv., scene 2. Theobald in his own edition printed this Italian quotation as follows: *Vinegia, Vinegia! qui non te vedi, ei non te pregia* (vol. ii. p. 130, ed. of 1733). In this letter, however, it reads as follows: *Venezia, Venezia, che non ti vedi, ei non ti preziaa.* In the folio of 1623 the following was the reading: *vemchie, vencha, que non te vnde, que non te perreche.* Pope followed Rowe and the later folios in printing it, *Venechi, venache a, qui non te vide, i non te piaech.* Theobald's Italian could have been improved: but there was no difficulty in ascertaining from it the meaning.

old copies in 'Henry VIII.'[1] and so representing Cardinal Wolsey as being a scholar, and a ripe and good one, from his cradle; and in 'Henry V.'[2] of his want of sagacity in restoring the text by reading "abounding valor" instead of "a bounding valor." Further, he pointed out that the story of 'Hamlet,' of the origin of which Pope professed his ignorance, came from the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus.

With the exception of the reading in 'Henry V.' — to which there has been only partial assent — all the restorations and changes given here are found usually in later editions. One of these — *fortress* for *fortune* — Theobald claimed as being in one sense his own. He had seen that the context required the emendation, and had actually made it before he had had the opportunity to discover that it existed in the folio of 1623; just as in his ignorance of its occurrence in that same work he had previously altered *guided* to *gilded* in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor.'[3] There is no more reason to question the assertion in the former case than in the latter. Both corrections were due to his own sagacity, though each was later confirmed by authority. The first folio, Theobald informs us, he had never seen until a short time before. Its supreme value no one at the time appreciated; but with a scholar's instinct he recognized at once its exceeding importance. Though only a little while in his hands he tells us in this letter that he had already collated by it a single play, the shortest in Shakespeare, and had found above forty material various readings of which Pope had taken no manner

[1] Act iv., scene 2. [2] Act iv., scene 3. [3] See page 169.

of notice. This had strengthened his previous convictions. As a result of his examination of the new edition he accordingly considered that he was justified in declaring that whatever were Pope's poetical merits, he could not but feel himself able to contest with him the palm of Shakespeare.

In this letter Theobald further announced that the necessity of reading and collating Pope's eight volumes rendered it necessary to postpone for a little while the publication of his own volumes of comment. Still, he assured subscribers, or intending subscribers, that with the exception of those to be made from the edition just published, his remarks had all been drawn out and copied and were ready for the press; and the manuscript would be subject to examination at his house by any one wishing to satisfy himself of the fact by personal inspection. Such an offer indicates how much at that time this method of publication had been abused, — how suspicions, too often justified, had come to prevail about the good faith of authors in resorting to it. The time of subscribing was now extended to the latter end of the following January. Thus closed the year 1728.

CHAPTER XVI

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEOBALD'S EDITION

JANUARY came and went without showing any signs of the appearance of Theobald's promised three volumes of emendations. It may be that there had not been a sufficient number of subscribers to justify sending to the press what he had already prepared. To this reason for delay, if it existed, there must have been added another and more powerful one. There can be little question of the fact that the greatness of the task he had assumed grew upon him. The impossibility of completing it satisfactorily in the time he had set would force itself more and more upon the attention of a man who was by nature essentially a scholar as distinguished from a man of letters. It is not unlikely too that a change of plan had already presented itself to his mind which would involve revision on a grander scale than he had originally contemplated.

But, however long he might delay his promised volumes, or for whatever reason, he could rest assured of the unceasing and virulent hostility of the man whose resentment he had roused. Outside of the Shakespearean controversy, the 'Parnassian War,' as it was then the fashion to style it, had shown distinct signs of having spent its violence by the end of 1728. It cannot

be said to have died out entirely, but it had been pretty effectually lulled to sleep. In the last month of that year Ward, to be sure, had made an exceedingly feeble but not ill-tempered reply to the attack upon himself in a poem called 'Durgen.' But this was a belated outburst. The whole matter, as well as the ill-feeling engendered by it, had now ceased to interest the public. Very few traces of its existence can be discovered in the newspaper press of the period under consideration. All this was suddenly changed by the publication in March, 1729, of the so-called 'Dunciad Variorum.' The war broke out at once with redoubled fury.

In 'The Dunciad' of 1728 it was the verse that kindled anger. In the enlarged edition of the following year the same result was produced by the prose of the prolegomena and appendix, and especially of the notes. In all these Pope represented himself as having acted entirely on the defensive. He had been for years a long-suffering but silent victim to slanders which he had now set out to expose, and to slanderers whom he was determined to crush. In consequence the commentary was full of severe reflections upon the lives and works of his enemies or supposed enemies. The hero of the poem was but one of a number upon whom the censure fell. Dennis, Welsted, Moore-Smythe, Concanen, Ozell, Giles Jacob, and numerous others were made the subjects of attack in his annotations. Their obscure origin was dwelt upon, as also their detestable practices in assailing Pope and his friends. It is very noticeable, indeed, how very sensitive the poet was to anything that had been said in disparagement of the

unfortunate play, 'Three Hours after Marriage,' which bore Gay's name, but in which Arbuthnot and he were charged with having a hand.

The ill-success of that piece was the principal cause of Pope's henceforth life-long hostility to the stage. No one cast any reflections upon it without incurring an enmity that never died out. Breval had satirized it in a farce called 'The Confederates'; eleven years after he was pilloried for the act in 'The Dunciad.' The same fate befell Charles Johnson for reflecting upon it in the prologue to 'The Sultaness' which was brought out in 1717. Giles Jacob, in his 'Poetical Register' had given a far from unfavorable estimate of Gay and his poetry. But in the account of his theatrical pieces he observed of the play in question that it "has some extraordinary scenes in it which seemed to trespass on female modesty."[1] This was a very mild way of describing the gross immorality of a piece of which Welsted justly said, it

> "was so lewd,
> E'en bullies blushed and beaux astonished stood."[2]

But mild as it was, it was enough. Jacobs was henceforth a marked man. He took his place in 'The Dunciad' with a note about his volume containing the lives of the poets, that "he very grossly and unprovoked abused in that book the author's friend, Mr. Gay."[3] We can get from this specimen some conception of

[1] Poetical Register, vol. ii. p. 114.

[2] Palæmon to Cælia at Bath; or the Triumvirate, 1717.

[3] Note to line 149 of Book 3, editions of 1729. But this part of the note was not in the quarto; it did not appear till the Gilliver octavo.

Pope's idea of gross abuse, when directed toward himself and his allies.

But however much other persons took part in the various controversies that arose from the publication of the 'Dunciad Variorum,' it is Theobald alone who concerns us here. He could not fail to feel keenly the abusive picture given of himself, which multitudes would accept as a genuine portrayal of his character and actions, and as a matter of fact have accepted. Attention has already been called to his determination not to return railing for railing. In his letter to 'Mist's Journal' some months before, communicating his proposals for the publication of his three volumes, he had distinctly proclaimed his intention of not replying in kind to the attacks aimed at himself. "As I endeavored," he said, "in my 'Shakespeare Restored' to treat Mr. Pope with all becoming deference, so I shall carefully avoid in these volumes any animadversions that may impeach me of ill manners. And as to follow him in his scurrilities I should think too great a reproach upon myself: so to name him oftener than there is a necessity for it in a work where he has been so egregiously mistaken, I shall think it doing him too much honor."[1]

To this resolution Theobald adhered faithfully to the last. At times indeed he was tempted to break silence and assume the offensive. Early in 1730 he consulted Warburton about the advisability of publishing some comments occasioned by the translation of Homer.[2] His proposal apparently met with the approval of his

[1] 'Mist's Journal,' No. 166, June 22, 1728.

[2] Letter to Warburton, March 10, 1730, Nichols, vol. ii. p. 551.

correspondent; but fortunately he never carried the project in effect. If right, he could only have made a further exposure of Pope's lack of scholarship, which scholars already knew fully, and for which none of the poet's readers cared a particle. There was in consequence nothing to be gained and everything to be risked by an undertaking of this sort. Theobald was not a writer who could have shone in a controversy where the knowledge was all on his side and the wit on the other. He was not one of that order of scholars who bear their load of learning lightly as a flower. He would have sunk under it. He would have written on matters in which hardly anybody took interest, in a way which would have destroyed the interest of the very few that did.

Theobald's intention to make no reply was well known to friends as well as foes. Cooke, in his revised edition of 'The Battle of the Poets,'[1] made a distinct reference to the resolution in the following lines:

> "Pope and his forces disappointed bend
> Their fury doubled on great Shakespeare's friend.
> . . . . . .
> The style of porters he would bring in use,
> As if all wit consisted in abuse;
> But Theobald, in keener weapons strong,
> Made his revenge to prove the foe was wrong;
> He wisely sees, while envious slanders fail,
> The better part is to convince, not rail."

Theobald in fact had a curious confidence in the ultimate triumph of truth, which has about it, when we consider

[1] Edition of 1728, p. 32.

what has actually happened, something almost pathetic. The only way he proposed to defend himself was by exposing the blunders of his adversary. "For myself, you know," he wrote to Warburton, "I have purposed to reply only in Shakespeare."[1] As time went on, he was less and less inclined to retaliate by personal attack, in spite of the persistent provocation he was receiving.

But though Theobald took no notice of the attacks upon his writings scattered through the notes to 'The Dunciad,' there were one or two which reflected upon his moral character. These stood on a different footing and demanded in consequence a different attitude. Pope, after stating that the hero of his poem had produced many forgotten plays, poems, and other pieces, went on to put down as a fact that he was the author of several anonymous letters in praise of them in 'Mist's Journal.' This assertion, as gratuitous as it was false, Theobald let pass without comment; but not so the personal grievance which Pope formulated immediately after. It was the very same which he had already specified at the end of his second edition of Shakespeare. Theobald had not come forward to assist him as he ought and when he ought. While he himself had been engaged upon the text of the dramatist he had requested all those interested in the plays to furnish him with whatever contributions they could to render the work more perfect. Theobald, however, had chosen to keep the results of his investigation to himself, obviously intending to make the use of them he did. "During the space of two years," ran this portion of the note, "while Mr. Pope was preparing his

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 248, letter of Oct. 25, 1729.

edition of Shakespear, and published advertisements requesting all lovers of the author to contribute to a more perfect one; this Restorer (who had then some correspondence with him, and was soliciting favors, by letters) did wholly conceal his design, 'till after its publication." [1]

The charge that while contemplating the publication of emendations of his own to Shakespeare and refusing aid to Pope, at the very time he was begging favors from him, was one to which Theobald felt bound to reply. Accordingly a few days after the publication of 'The Dunciad Variorum' he addressed a letter on the subject to the editor — or, as the style then was, to the author — of the 'Daily Journal.' [2] Before any impartial tribunal the reply would have been deemed conclusive. Incidentally he disposed of the first assertion. "To say I concealed my design," he wrote, "is a slight mistake; for I had no such certain design till I saw how incorrect an edition Mr. Pope had given the public." But his main object was to defend himself from the charge of ingratitude for the favors he had received. One favor, indeed, he had requested of Pope. After he had brought out a play upon the stage — he did not specify which one — he asked him to assist him in a few tickets towards his benefit. About a month later he received his tickets back with the excuse from the poet that he had been all the while from home, and had not received the parcel until it was too late to do anything with it.

[1] Dunciad, quarto of 1729. Book 1, line 106. The note is not in modern editions.

[2] Daily Journal, April 17, 1729. Reprinted in Nichols, vol. ii. p. 214, as addressed to Concanen.

The excuse was a civil one; it was possibly true, it was undoubtedly believed by its recipient to be true. At all events it led him, when he put forth proposals for his translation of Æschylus, to solicit Pope to recommend his design, if it did not interfere with the success of his version of the 'Odyssey.' To this Pope replied very cordially in a letter from which Theobald quoted the exact words. He expressed his pleasure that the latter had undertaken the work, and would be glad to do what he could to aid it; and though he felt a repugnance and indeed an inability to solicit subscriptions for his own translation, still for Theobald he would ask those of his friends with whom he was familiar enough to ask for anything of such a nature. The asking was pretty certainly never performed; if so, it was wholly unsuccessful. From that day to the publication of his 'Shakespeare Restored,' Theobald added that he had never received one further line from Mr. Pope, had never had an intimation of a single subscriber secured by his interest, nor even an order that on the list should be put down his own name.

Pope was certainly under no obligation to subscribe for books he did not want. His own success that way had doubtless led to his being pestered with constant applications of the sort. But under the circumstances it was hardly worth while to taunt his antagonist with soliciting favors which he in turn had half promised to grant and had wholly neglected to perform. Theobald added that he would never have troubled the public with these facts, had not the insinuation been industriously circulated to hurt his interest in the subscription for his

'Remarks on Shakespeare' which was shortly to appear, and for the play which was designed for his benefit at Drury Lane the following week. He concluded with an allusion to Pope's habit of personal attack. "It is my misfortune," he said, "I can boast of but a very scanty interest and much less merit; and consequently both are the more easily to be shocked. I had no method but this of appealing to those many, whom I had not the honor of approaching for their favor; and of humbly hoping it the rather, because all my poor attempts in writing are calculated to entertain, and none at the expense of any man's character."

No one is likely to deny that Theobald was fully justified in setting his conduct in a proper light before the public. It was natural that he should object to being held up to general reprobation as exhibiting ingratitude for favors he had never received. The account just given of the circumstances was never controverted nor even disputed. But also the accusation itself was never retracted. If anything, it was strengthened rather than weakened in the editions of 'The Dunciad' that followed. In the second octavo following the quarto of 1729 Pope paraded the remark of Theobald that he had for years been engaged in the study of Shakespeare as a full confirmation of the truth of his own original assertion that the design of bringing out a treatise of the character he had produced had been carefully concealed. "Which he was since not ashamed to own in a 'Daily Journal' of Nov. 26, 1728" was the inference Pope drew from that letter.[1]

e p 316 332

[1] Note to line 106 of Book 1. The note is not in modern editions. This part of it first appeared in the Gilliver octavo of 1729.

This interpretation of his opponent's words would never have occurred to any one else than the poet. But the cool assumption that a man who may have been working for years upon the text of an author is under obligations to contribute the results of his labors to another, with little recognition and no compensation, struck even him upon reflection as one which would not commend itself to the popular intelligence; and even if it possibly did so to any person, the revenge taken would seem altogether out of proportion to the offence. Accordingly, in the so-called second edition of that year, which appeared in November, the note was revised. A statement was added to it that satisfaction had been promised to any one who could contribute to the greater perfection of the work. Further, in all the editions after the quarto an insinuation was conveyed — there was no direct assertion to that effect — that Theobald had been concerned in the outcry raised in the press that Pope had joined with the publisher to promote an extravagant subscription. These, it was intimated, were the reasons which had lifted him into his accidental pre-eminence as hero of the poem.

The occasion of all this manipulation of the notes was the contempt which Theobald had naturally expressed for the claim that he was bound to render the assistance for which Pope had advertised. On this point he had expressed himself with a distinctness not to be mistaken. In so doing he had incidentally disclosed the nature and extent of the studies which had fitted him for the task he had undertaken. "It is a very grievous complaint on his side," he wrote, "that I would not communicate

all my observations upon Shakespeare, tho' he requested it by public advertisements. I must own, I considered the labor of twelve years' study upon this author of too much value rashly to give either the profit of it to a bookseller whom I had no obligations to; or to the credit of an editor so likely to be thankless. I'll venture to tell Mr. Pope that I have made about two thousand emendations on Beaumont and Fletcher; and if he should take it in his head to promise us a correct edition of those poets, and require all assistances by his royal proclamation, I verily believe I shall be such a rebel as to take no notice of his mandate." [1] This was the shameless avowal of his concealed design of which Pope spoke.

There were other passages in the communication of April 17 which were not calculated to allay any irritation which the poet felt. In none of his replies had Theobald been content to stand merely on the defensive. He regularly proceeded to furnish further illustrations of his satirist's incapacity as an editor. Pope had constantly criticised his antagonist for what he called word-splitting, for dwelling at length upon minutiæ that were of the least possible consequence. It was easy for Theobald to retort that his opponent had set out to discharge the duty of an editor with hardly even aiming to understand his author himself, or with having any ambition that his reader should; or when he did aim to understand he had shown such a happy facility in misapprehending the meaning that he had explained it into nonsense.

In exemplification of this charge he pointed out the

[1] Daily Journal, Nov. 26, 1728.

erroneous, not to say ridiculous, definitions which had been given of *reechy*, *germins*, and *element*.[1] But in this letter there were four emendations which are now accepted in all or nearly all editions of Shakespeare. For two of them Theobald subsequently gave the credit to others. They are worth noting here, not merely for themselves, but because they explain the impression he made upon his immediate contemporaries, and the fact that he was so long enabled to hold his own against the virulent enmity of the most influential man of letters of his time. The passages, as given here, are taken from Pope's edition; but in every case but one they present the reading which had been handed down from the earliest impressions. The unintelligibility of the original finds its counterpart in the felicity of the emendation. We get in consequence from them, as we can in no other way, a conception of the sagacity and ingenuity which have brought the text of Shakespeare out of its confusion into the comparative clearness in which we find it to-day.

The first extract is from 'Measure for Measure.' In this the Duke is represented as addressing the procurer in these indignant words:

> "Say to thyself
> By their abominable and beastly touches
> I drink, I eat away myself, and live."[2]

The utter incomprehensibility of "I eat away myself" of the last line vanishes at once in the emendation contained in this letter, —

> "I drink, I eat, array myself, and live."

[1] See page 91. [2] Act iii., scene 2.

In his edition Theobald ascribed this most felicitous of corrections to his friend, Hawley Bishop; but the next one, even more puzzling, is entirely his own. It occurs in the quibbling dialogue that goes on between Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch, and runs as follows in Pope's edition:

"*Sir Andrew.* O had I but followed the arts!
Sir Toby. Then hadst thou had an excellent head of hair.
Sir Andrew. Why, would that have mended my hair?
Sir Toby. Past question, for thou seest it will not cool my nature."[1]

It is not always an easy matter to get at the meaning of Shakespeare's quibbles, even when they are given as he actually wrote them. This last reply of Sir Toby's, however, might have remained incomprehensible to the present day — we are all wise after the event — had not Theobald changed "cool my nature" into "curl by nature."

The next two emendations belong to 'Love's Labor's Lost.' The first occurs in Biron's humorous denunciation of the god of love, whom he describes as

"This signior Junio, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid."[2]

"Signior Junio" was Pope's substitution for the "signior Junios" of the original authorities. Theobald, following a hint of a friend, as he told us later, changed it here into "senior-junior," corresponding to the following "giant-dwarf." It is the reading generally followed in modern editions; but singularly enough he himself discarded it when he came to publish his own, under the

[1] Act i., scene 3. [2] Act iii., scene 1.

notion that there was a possible allusion to a character Junius in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Bonduca.' But to this same play he contributed an emendation which brought clearness to a passage previously wrapt in obscurity. Furthermore, it was a correction in exact consonance with the character of the speaker. It is found in the conversation which goes on between the curate Nathanael and Holofernes, the representative of the pedant, both in the modern sense of that word and in the Elizabethan sense of 'schoolmaster.' The latter finds fault with certain love verses which have been read. They lack the graces of Ovid, he says. "Ovidius Naso was the man," he adds. "And why, indeed, Naso, but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy? The jerks of invention imitary is nothing. So doth the hound his master, the ape his keeper, the tired horse his rider."[1] This was the way the passage read in all the original authorities. So it appeared in the editions previous to Theobald's. In them it was passed over in silence, either because it was unnoticed or could not be comprehended. "Invention imitary" was certainly a puzzle. Yet all difficulties disappeared the moment the passage was printed as it appeared corrected in this communication:

"Why, indeed, Naso, but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention? *Imitari* is nothing; so doth the hound his master, etc.

But though Theobald replied to the attacks made upon his conduct as a man, he never made any attempt to correct the absolutely false statements made about

[1] Act iv., scene 2.

him as a writer. It would be a tedious and unprofitable task to hunt down all the misrepresentations with which the notes to 'The Dunciad' swarm. Yet one must be followed up, partly because of its bearing upon the subject, and partly because it illustrates both the intellectual greatness and the moral obliquity of his adversary. In a passage of peculiar brilliancy, only part of which appears in modern editions of the poem, and that too dissevered from its proper context, Pope attacked Theobald as a commentator. He represented him in his apostrophe to the goddess of dulness as thus speaking of himself:

> "Here studious I unlucky moderns save,
> Nor sleeps one error in its father's grave,
> Old puns restore, lost blunders nicely seek,
> And crucify poor Shakespear once a week.
> For thee I dim these eyes, and stuff this head,
> With all such reading as was never read;
> For thee supplying, in the worst of days,
> Notes to dull books, and prologues to dull plays;
> For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it,
> And write about it, Goddess, and about it." [1]

It has been found very easy in these latter days to underrate Pope's genius. Those who do so may felicitate themselves that they are free from any possibility of being exposed to its attack. The justice of the lines here given is not in question; it is the wit which excites admiration, and in one sense the wisdom. Can a more

[1] Dunciad of 1729, Book 1, lines 161–170. Lines 5, 6, 9, 10, are in Book 4 of modern editions, lines 249–252, the rest have disappeared. The eighth line refers to Theobald's notes to Cooke's Hesiod, and his prologue to James Moore-Smythe's comedy of 'The Rival Modes.'

vivid picture be drawn than is found in them of that plodding but unintelligent industry which piles up heaps of explanatory matter upon points which present no difficulty, and cumbers a classic with a fungous growth of annotation in which the work of the author is almost entirely lost in the inanities and trivialities of the commentator? The justness of it, to be sure, as a criticism of Theobald's labors can be estimated from the fact that the part of it which is retained in modern editions now applies to Bentley.

Pope was not content with letting these lines stand for themselves. In the enlarged editions of 'The Dunciad' he added a comment to the one which represents poor Shakespeare as being weekly crucified by Theobald. "For some time," he wrote, "once a week or fortnight, he printed in 'Mist's Journal' a single remark or poor conjecture on some word or pointing of Shakespear." Both the line and the note have disappeared from regular editions of 'The Dunciad.' Only occasionally are they now found in the commentary upon the poem. But the statement here made has been constantly repeated. From that day to this there has hardly been a reference to Theobald's course, there has hardly been even a cursory account of the controversy in which he became engaged, in which he has not been represented as steadily annoying Pope by these repeated reminders of his lack of diligence or lack of capacity. Again and again have we been told of Theobald's weekly or fortnightly contributions to 'Mist's Journal.' It was malignity, it is implied, that thus led him to disturb the poet's peace. Hence it was natural, if not justifiable, for Pope to show anger.

Such are the statements. What are the facts? The articles that Theobald himself sent to 'Mist's Journal' from the date of the publication of his criticism of Pope's edition of Shakespeare to the publication of these lines representing him as crucifying poor Shakespeare once a week, were just one. This one, further, contained but a single emendation, and even that came in incidentally. Add to this one other communication — that of March 16, 1728 — which was sent to that newspaper not by Theobald, but by a friend of his, in all probability, however, with his consent. In this were found several noted corrections. Consequently, all his contributions to 'Mist's Journal' containing remarks on the text of Shakespeare, whether furnished directly or indirectly, amounted to precisely two. The columns of that paper will be searched in vain for any further justification of the assertion made in Pope's note. In fact, up to the date of the suppression of that journal in September, 1728, all the communications of Theobald of any sort which appeared in it, during those years, reach the exact number of three.

Pope himself came to feel that his note needed some qualification. So in the second edition of 'The Dunciad' of 1729, he added a few further words in regard to Theobald's contributing some single remark or poor conjecture on Shakespeare. These, he said, were made "either in his own name, or in letters to himself as from others without name." [1] Pope perhaps meant to say "letters from himself to others without name." At

[1] Note to line 162 of Book 1, 2d ed. of 1729, p. 75. The note is not in modern editions.

least this is the only way the remark can be reconciled with the facts. But alteration of such a sort would not have made the statement itself true; it would only have made it less extravagantly mendacious. Even were we to include Theobald's contributions during these years to all the journals on the subject of Shakespeare, we could add but three articles more. Of these latter but one appeared before the publication of 'The Dunciad'; the two which followed that poem were called out by Pope's attacks upon himself.

The account just given conveys a good idea both of Pope's truthfulness and of the innocent and unsuspecting faith in it which has been exhibited by his editors and biographers. Modern impressions about Theobald have been derived almost wholly from the assertions of the poet. Of several things written or done by him succeeding generations have derived their knowledge from the notes to 'The Dunciad'; and it is knowledge perverted by misrepresentation and misquotation so as to make him seem to think and feel altogether differently from what he actually thought and felt. The examples already given — and they could be multiplied largely — prove conclusively that no one would or could ever get a proper conception of what Theobald said or did on any occasion from the account of it given by Pope after the original communication, containing the exact words, had passed from sight and memory in the oblivion which usually overtakes everything which is confined to the columns of a newspaper. These calumnies have remained uncontradicted in every edition of Pope from the earliest to the latest, including even one so gener-

ally hostile to the poet as that of William Lisle Bowles. The lies have now got so great a start that it is simply hopeless to expect that the truth will ever overtake them, so far at least as the belief of the general public is concerned.

During the whole of 1729 and 1730 Theobald, as we know from his correspondence, was busily occupied in the study of Shakespeare's text. Meanwhile the desire widely entertained that he should himself edit the works of the dramatist began to show signs of possible realization. The difficulties in the way were gradually surmounted. The exclusive possession by any one of the right to print the text was first doubted, then denied. When it came to be carefully considered, it had to be abandoned. Still this result was reached slowly. It was not till the latter part of 1729 that Theobald seriously contemplated bringing out an edition of the plays. It is evident from his words that it was then only a possibility, not a certainty. "I know you will not be displeased," he wrote to Warburton, "if I should tell you in your ear, perhaps I may venture to join the text to my 'Remarks.' But of that more a little time hence."[1] By the following March what seems a definite decision to that effect had been reached. In a letter belonging to this month he informed the same correspondent that it was necessary now to inform the public that he intended to give an edition of the poet's text along with his corrections.[2]

Yet even then it is clear that all obstacles had not

[1] Letter of Nov. 6, 1729, Nichols, vol. ii. p. 254.

[2] Ibid. p. 551, letter of March 10, 1730.

been removed. Possibly the negotiations between the various publishers to carry out the object in view had hung fire. There may have been doubts as to the legality of the proceeding. At all events it was not until November, 1731, that Theobald entered into a contract with Tonson for the publication of the work. With his house five others were joined. It is evident from the arrangement then made that he had done a great deal towards the performance of the task; equally evident that he did not fully appreciate how much more remained to be done. The completed work, it was then agreed, was to appear the following March; it did not come out till nearly two years after the time fixed upon. These successive changes of plan necessitated a delay which turned out in each instance much longer than had been anticipated. It further exposed Theobald to the charge of extorting money from subscribers without designing to give them anything in return. But he was too thoroughly a scholar to hurry anything crude into the world, and preferred the reproach of being behindhand in doing what he set out to do to the regret he would feel for having done it unsatisfactorily. That he was sensitive to the charge, however, there is no question. In writing to the antiquary, Martin Folkes, informing him that having now signed articles with Tonson, he was preparing to put out as correct an edition of Shakespeare as lay in his power, he expressed the conviction that he would soon convince the public as well as his friends that the insinuations levelled against him were very unjust.[1]

In November, 1731, Pope read in his personal organ,

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 619, letter of Nov. 17, 1731.

the 'Grub-street Journal,' an item copied into it from the 'Daily Journal.' "We hear," were its words, "that Mr. Theobald, being now entirely ready to give the public an edition of Shakespeare's plays, with his remarks and emendations, has articled with Mr. Tonson for publishing the same in six volumes in octavo with all possible despatch."[1] Pope could not well have been ignorant that a scheme of some such sort was in contemplation. It had in fact been more than once referred to in the 'Grub-street Journal.' But he had pretty clearly been disposed to look upon it as a remote possibility, very much as was the publication of the translation of Æschylus which was sometimes joined with it.[2] Furthermore the name of Tonson had never before been mentioned in connection with the edition. The announcement in consequence took him completely by surprise. More than that, it disturbed him profoundly. Apparently not only was the work to come out soon but it was to come from the publishing house which had issued his own edition. This put an entirely different aspect upon the matter. He wrote at once in great agitation to Tonson to let him know the truth. "I learn," he said, "from an article published in a late daily journal that Tibbald is to have the *text* of Shakespear, *together* with his remarks, printed by *you*." He presumed that this was not so; for had it been, Tonson would in some way have acquainted him with any plans of his own about the works of the dramatist. Still, while he believed it no more than some

[1] Grub-street Journal, No. 97, Nov. 11, 1731.

[2] *E. g.*, Grub-street Journal, No. 37, Sept. 17, 1730; also No. 40, Oct. 8, 1730, in an article not improbably written by Pope himself.

idle report crept into the news, or perhaps put into it by Theobald himself, he was anxious to ascertain whether there was any ground for the statement.

It was the younger Tonson who had then the management of the publishing-house. It was to him that this letter was addressed. He was in a somewhat ticklish situation. Still, he contrived to temper the information so as to make it as tolerable as possible; he could not make it palatable. He admitted the truth. Others, he wrote in reply, were concerned in the text of Shakespeare as well as himself. With these Theobald had been in negotiation, and the work would be brought out, whether he had anything to do with it or not. It was for his own advantage to share in it; it was for Pope's advantage that he should be one of its printers. Exactly how far this statement represented the precise facts, it is not easy to tell nor necessary to determine. The publisher, in order to give the most plausible look to the transaction, clearly felt it incumbent to exercise the strictest parsimony in the disclosure of the exact truth. Pope had to accept the situation. He professed indeed to be pleased with it. He should now have some one among the printers who could be relied upon to prevent his personal character suffering from falsehoods such as had been vented by this villain of a Theobald in his specimens and in letters concerning them.

It was characteristic of Pope that he immediately began to devise schemes for the further annoyance of the man he pursued with unrelenting hostility. To the elder Tonson, now retired from active business, he at once wrote a letter. He was careful, however, to

enclose it unsealed to the younger Tonson, to be transmitted by him to his uncle. The part designed for the person to whom it was nominally addressed concerned itself with certain matters about which he asked specific information. The real reason for writing the letter was contained in the part intended for the eye of the man who was now the acting head of the firm. Pope thus got an opportunity to suggest to him in an indirect way a scheme which he did not care to propose outright. He at first expressed surprise that any other proprietor could be concerned in Shakespeare besides Tonson himself. "But," he added, "if an edition of the text can be printed without his consent, and if the propriety to this author be so wandering, I'm very sure, however my edition or Tibbald's may sell, I know a way to put any friend upon publishing a new one that will vastly outsell them both (of which I will talk with you when we meet); and not of this author only, but of all the other best English poets; a project which I am sure the public would thank me for, and which none of the Dutch-headed Scholiasts are capable of executing."[1]

The lure dangled before the eyes of the younger Tonson, for whose consideration the proposal was really designed, did not prove an attraction. He did not even manifest any curiosity to hear further about the project. His house had already gained a pretty clear conception of what were Pope's notions of editing. He must have been confident that any scheme was futile that aimed to sell Shakespeare on any merits beside his own. Especially futile would be an edition of that author which

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. ix. p. 549, letter of Nov. 14, 1731.

would permit Pope to make its pages largely a vehicle for the expression of his feelings about friends and foes, through notes, after the manner of 'The Dunciad.' So, while he expressed himself as obliged for the compliment of enclosing the communication to his uncle open, he returned it under the feeling that it would look much better to be sent to its destination as coming directly from the writer himself. It was the politest of correspondence; but in this jockeying game going on between poet and publisher, the honors rested easily with the latter. Pope found himself baffled at every point, and his new scheme of editing Shakespeare was never heard of again.

CHAPTER XVII

WARBURTON'S ATTACK ON POPE

For the four or five years following the publication of 'The Dunciad' the Shakespearean war went on furiously. It was, to be sure, but one of a number of controversies that were set in motion by that satire, or that gained from it additional vigor. For us, however, it is the only one of importance. There is now a very prevalent impression that it was a one-sided affair from the outset. Such was very far from being the case. Whatever the difference in the intellectual standing and repute of the two men chiefly concerned, the real disproportion between them in the contest was not so great as it now appears to us. It certainly did not appear great to their contemporaries. To them the principals were far from being unequally matched. Theobald could not pretend to a particle of Pope's genius. The poetry he produced was at best respectable; it would have been much more interesting if it had been worse. On the other hand the superiority of his scholarship, both in ancient and modern tongues, was incontestable, as also his far more intimate acquaintance with Shakespeare. When it came to a question in which knowledge of this sort was involved, Pope was at a hopeless disadvantage.

There was one matter in particular in which this form of his superiority was conspicuously manifest. He exhibited a familiarity with older and obscurer English literature drawn upon by the Elizabethan dramatists, which his antagonist made no pretension to possess and in consequence affected to ridicule. Theobald saw early that if he hoped to understand many of Shakespeare's allusions, he must consult the works which were popular in Shakespeare's time, though then long forgotten. This method of proceeding strikes us now as the only rational one to follow; but apparently it had hardly occurred to any one before, and by many was not too highly thought of then. It excited the derision of Pope and his partisans. He spoke contemptuously of Theobald's laboring to prove Shakespeare "conversant in such authors as Caxton and Wynkin, rather than in Homer or Chaucer."[1] In his pointed phrase he described these books as "the classics of an age that heard of none." It was in reference to them that he had represented Theobald as having stuffed

"his head
With all such reading as was never read."

The truth of these words was not equal to their wit. Unfortunately for Pope, it was the very reading that had been read by a man far greater than himself. It had been read by Shakespeare, and the one who set out to illustrate Shakespeare was under the necessity of reading it too, if he had any expectation of understanding what Shakespeare wrote. But there was something

[1] Note to line 162, Book 1, quarto of 1729. The note is not in modern editions.

more than knowledge in which Theobald excelled his adversary. He had manifested an acumen in dealing with corrupt passages which the men who then followed and have since followed Pope's lead in delighting to call him dull have for obvious reasons refrained from attempting to rival even remotely.

Of course there were those with no dislike for Theobald, nor with any special regard for Pope, who were not displeased with the satire directed by the poet against the commentator. That peculiarity of our nature which makes many of us find something not altogether disagreeable in the misfortunes of our best friends naturally gave proof of its existence in the case of one towards whom the attitude of others would be that of indifference. Undoubtedly there were satirical references to Theobald as king of the dunces which were heard in conversation and crept occasionally into print.[1] Yet it must be said that outside of those produced by the circle of Pope's devoted adherents, the number of these is signally few. It is manifest, during the years immediately preceding the publication of his own edition, that Theobald had a strong body of friends and sympathizers. Naturally there would be included in it every one who had himself suffered under Pope's attacks. The number was no small one, and many belonging to it were connected with the press. These kept up a series of not altogether complimentary reflections upon the poet, annoying even though far from destructive.

[1] See, for illustration, a poem entitled 'A New Session of Poets for the Year 1730' in 'The Universal Spectator,' No. 122, Saturday, Feb. 6, 1730.

To a certain extent too, lack of effectiveness was made up by frequency of fire.

Heavier onslaughts fell upon Pope from other quarters. The veteran critic Dennis, covered with the scars of scores of literary battles, to whom controversy indeed was as the breath of his nostrils, plunged at once into the fray. He followed the publication of 'The Dunciad Variorum' of 1729 with some remarks upon that poem in the form of a letter addressed to Theobald himself. The very title-page of the pamphlet gives a conception, though an inadequate one, of the spirit with which it is animated. We are told in it that passages in the preliminaries to 'The Dunciad' and in the preface to the translation of the 'Iliad,' show their author's want of judgment. Furthermore, original letters here printed, written by several authors, including the poet himself, prove the falsehood of Pope, his envy and his malice. The title-page thus imperfectly indicates the nature of the pamphlet. It will therefore excite no surprise to find that Dennis terms the satirist a wretch,[1] a little envious, mischievous creature,[2] a bouncing bully of Parnassus.[3] These were merely the characteristic amenities of the literary controversies of the times, and Pope certainly had neither by precept nor example used his influence to moderate their outspokenness.

Remarks of this nature were therefore not in themselves surprising. But it did excite a good deal of astonishment to have the old critic, whose hand had been against every man's, break the unvarying record

[1] Remarks upon The Dunciad, p. 9.
[2] Ibid. p. 39.
[3] Ibid. p. 11.

of years by praising Theobald without stint. Of him, his learning, his sagacity, his possession of that modesty which always attends merit, he spoke in terms of highest eulogy. The value to be attached to his opinion was distinctly impaired indeed by the peculiar estimate he professed to take of the literary standing of Pope. Not satisfied with exposing his malice, his impudence, his falsehood, his want of honor, his habit of writing panegyrics upon himself and having them printed in the name of others, he endeavored also to establish his utter ignorance of the poetic art. He styled him a poetaster. This was not the way to produce confidence in his own taste or judgment. Still it was not the censure of Pope that caused wonder, but the undoubtedly genuine praise given to his opponent. When a few years later Mallet attacked what he professed to deem the petty drudgery of Theobald's labors, he did not fail to express his astonishment at the tribute paid to him in the treatise just described:

> "For this dread Dennis (and who can forbear,
> Dunce or not dunce, relating it, to stare?)
> His head tho' jealous, and his years fourscore,
> Even Dennis praises, who ne'er praised before."

But the list of sympathizers with Theobald was by no means confined to the personal or literary foes of his antagonist. There were many who stood by him because they recognized that he was as much superior to Pope as an editor as Pope was to him as a poet. It included, in truth, all the intelligent and genuine admirers of Shakespeare, all who were anxious to have his works brought out in the best conceivable shape.

His preliminary efforts towards the rectification of the text roused the highest expectations of the completed work. The single remarks and poor conjectures upon some word or pointing of Shakespeare, as Pope termed his emendations, had given him high reputation with all competent to judge. On his part Theobald neglected nothing that would ensure the success of his undertaking. Not merely were his own labors steadfast and persistent, he sought aid from every quarter from which he could hope to derive information which would be of benefit in revealing the meaning or establishing the text. Upon special topics he consulted specialists. Nor was he in want of volunteer assistants, some of whom chose to remain unknown. None of these men contributed much in comparison with himself; but to every one he made the fullest acknowledgment of the service rendered.

But early in 1729 he fancied he had found a treasure. Towards the end of 1726 — if the dates given are correct — the Reverend William Warburton, then an obscure country clergyman, had visited London. Among the many favors which he acknowledged having received from Concanen, he particularly thanked him for having introduced him "to the knowledge of those worthy and ingenious gentlemen that made up our last night's conversation."[1] This has sometimes been spoken of as that weekly conclave of Pope's antagonists which owed its creation either to the poet's imagination or his belief in his lying informers, and its later acceptance to the credulity of his biographers.

[1] Nichols, ii. 198.

It could not have been at any such gathering, even had it a real existence, that Warburton was present; for at the time indicated neither the treatise on the Bathos nor 'The Dunciad' had been published. But during this visit to London he had met Concanen and Theobald; and unaware then that his companions were dunces, he had found their society particularly agreeable. To the latter he had promised to send some observations he had been making on Shakespeare. When later Theobald had become seriously engaged in the preparations of his corrections of the text, he was glad of the assistance which Warburton on his part was glad to render. As early at least as March, 1729, began an active correspondence between them, which with some intermissions was kept up until after the publication of Theobald's edition in January, 1734.

Warburton's share in this correspondence has disappeared. The letters on both sides were returned, and we can rest confident that the friend of Pope took care to destroy every vestige of his friendship with Pope's rival. But as might be expected from his nature, he was not disposed to be content with expressing his views in private. With his usual vigor and impetuosity he took the field to defend Theobald, or rather to attack Pope. To the 'Daily Journal' he sent three communications containing emendations of Shakespeare mingled with attacks upon Shakespeare's editor. These letters are so curious and characteristic that they deserve to be rescued from the oblivion which overtook them in their own day. In that state they have remained ever since. It was a repose which Warburton was very

careful not to disturb and Theobald was too high-minded to break. So completely indeed was all knowledge of them lost that neither during the prelate's life nor during the century and a quarter which has elapsed since his death has there ever been made to them so much even as an allusion. As they still remain practically inaccessible to the vast majority of men, some notice of their contents becomes imperatively necessary in any history of Shakespearean controversy. Of course they were anonymous. Had their authorship been known at the time, we can rest assured that Warburton, instead of enjoying as a legacy the copyright of Pope's works, would have occupied one of the most elaborate niches in his temple of infamy, as he called 'The Dunciad.'

The views expressed of Pope in these communications take here precedence of his proposed emendations. The attack upon the poet was marked by all of Warburton's usual truculence and arrogance. The first of these letters appeared in the 'Daily Journal' of March 22, 1729. In true clerical style it went for a text to 'The Dunciad' itself, and from it took for a motto this slightly altered line:

"And crucify Pope's Shakespeare once a week."

The tone of the article was contemptuous throughout. Warburton represented a friend of his, a pretty critic, and one of the poet's hundred thousand admirers, as objecting to his substitution of "Pope's" for "poor" in the line just cited. A man, his interlocutor had said, could not be supposed to defame himself. "But

experience teaches," rejoined the writer, "that there is nothing more common than for men under the torture to defame themselves, and that Mr. P—— was on the rack when the printer took his confession is plain from his so basely traducing friend and foe without distinction."

The second letter, which had the same motto, appeared in the number for April 8. It was more personal in its attack than the preceding, more injurious in its insinuations, and more virulent in its tone. It opened with the story, told by Cervantes, of a painter who agreed with the burghers of a certain village to paint the king's arms for the town house. He secured for this purpose a good subscription and began the work. But finding it grow upon him, and that he would make nothing of it, he threw away his pencil in great disdain, returned the money, and told his neighbors he had a genius above *tantas baratijas*, "which literally translated means, above such piddling matters." "In like manner," Warburton continued, "the late editor of Shakespeare, with equal skill, tho' not with equal honesty (for I don't hear that ever he returned one penny of the immense sum levied upon the public on this pretence), having, after all his pains, left Shakespeare as he found him, in great rage consigns over the province to *piddling T——s*, and returns to his primitive occupation of *libelling* and *bawdy ballad-making;* and after all this, he has the insolence to talk of his hundred thousand admirers."

The charge of profiting by the Shakespeare subscription was one which so irritated Pope that he who was

known to have made it was never forgiven. But what followed in this letter was even worse. His friend, the pretty critic already mentioned, is represented by Warburton as having cast his eye upon what he had so far written. His indignation at once found vent. For what purpose, he is reported as saying, "do you yet foment your itch of writing against that great man? I believe I can tell you enough effectually to cure it. Mr. P—— no sooner saw your former paper than he knew you at the first glance to be of the beggarly brotherhood of half-a-crown-tale turners; that you was monstrously in debt; your lumber of a library almost all pawned; your tailor unpaid; and that you have an ugly trick of going supperless to bed. This with his usual sagacity and contempt. But putting on a severer brow, he swore a bloody oath, that if you still persisted in the preposterous ambition of dining upon his name, he would ram you down to eternal infamy in the most dirty hole in the next edition of 'The Dunciad,' even between Curll and L——."

The letter-writer — that is, Warburton — represented himself as not having been terrified by the prospect thus held out. This had led his friend to reason with him more coolly. "'What is it,'" he said, "'that you would infer from these errors you have pointed out before us? Is it that Mr. P—— is no philosopher nor poet? Alas, how fallacious is this way of reasoning. You shall see me turn it directly against you. Calumny and profaneness are two of the most considerable branches of modern poetry, and Mr. P——'s very enemies must allow him to shine dis-

tinguished in each.'" Then his friend proceeded to observe that no one was safe from the poet's base and impious attacks. That every one must see "who remembers nor sleep nor sanctuary could cover the immortal Mr. Addison from an outrageous satire; who remembers nor being naked or sick could secure some unfortunate men from having their very miseries most barbarously ridiculed without provocation in 'The Dunciad;' who remembers, lastly, nor fane nor capitol could screen that incomparable patriot and prelate, the bishop of S——y[1] from the blackest venom of his pen." These were the parting words of his friend, and according to Warburton they impressed him a good deal. "I determined," he wrote, "to follow his advice and leave the editor to the reflections of his own conscience, which must needs be wonderfully regaled as often as the memory of 'The Dunciad' comes across it; which I predict, from the universal abhorrence I observe expressed to it, will sink him lower than his own Profund, and like Hercules' shirt last him to his funeral."

Warburton, however, could not prevail upon himself to leave Pope entirely to the reflections of his own conscience. He returned to the charge in a letter in the 'Daily Journal' of April 18. In it he spoke of "the abounding beastliness and obscenity" of 'The Dunciad' as contrasted with the wit and humor of the 'MacFlecknoe' it imitated. His communication, however, was largely given up to attacks on readings in Pope's edition. He ridiculed some of his alterations and

[1] Hoadley. The whole passage is, of course, an adaptation of the speech of Aufidius in 'Coriolanus,' act i., scene 10.

some of his explanations. He censured his change of *thrive* or *thriv'd*, into *three* in 'Timon';[1] in 'Othello,'[2] his adoption of *Indian* instead of *Judean;* and in particular he found enjoyment in "that short nooky isle of Albion," into which the poet had transformed in 'Henry V.'[3] Shakespeare's "nook-shotten isle of Albion." Besides two special emendations of his own, he contributed an explanation of the following passage in 'Lear,' in which Edgar, in witnessing his father's miserable change of fortune, exclaims

> "World, world, O world!
> But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
> Life would not yield to age."[4]

This was one of the few instances in which Warburton refrained entirely from chasing any of the fanciful will-o'-the-wisp interpretations which were continually leading him astray. It was so sensible that of itself it would tend to make one doubt his authorship of the letter; it is so all-sufficient that it seems hard to believe that he should have been willing to accept for a moment Theobald's change of *hate* into *wait*. Yet that he did so for a time is a fact. In his edition Theobald made an allusion to this letter. He observed that various attempts had been made to give a meaning to the passage as it stood in the old editions; but none of them had been satisfactory. "Mr. Pope's mock-reasoning upon it," he continued, "has already been rallied in print, so I forbear to revive it; and the gentleman who

[1] Act iii., scene 3.
[2] Act v., scene 2.
[3] Act iii., scene 5.
[4] Act iv., scene 1.

then advanced a comment of his own upon the passage has since come over to my emendation."[1] But the gentleman who had advanced a comment — whose name Theobald was careful to conceal — very wisely went back to his original interpretation when he came to produce an edition of his own.[2]

After Warburton had exposed to his heart's content the shortcomings of Pope in the work he had edited, he gave expression to certain reflections upon his ability as a commentator and his character as a man. A few sentences will give an idea of their general spirit. "How great," he wrote, "the distance between rhyming and reasoning. That a man should so far mistake his talent! It must be owned he makes a pretty figure enough in the paraphrasing a psalm, or burlesquing a beatitude; but to meddle with these dull matters, see what comes of it! . . . What now, reader, is to be thought of this man, who has no other terms for the whole body of his contemporary writers, than dunce, blockhead, fool, which he rings changes upon in a most outrageous libel, the disgrace of the good sense, politeness and humanity of Great Britain?" The contrast is both amazing and amusing between the opinions here expressed and those poured out later when "dear Mr. Pope," as he was wont to speak of the poet, became the object of a laudation as vigorous as had been his previous vituperation.

In these three letters were contained also ten emendations of Shakespeare's text. They were Warburton's

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. v. p. 178.
[2] Warburton's Shakespeare, vol. vi. p. 96.

first published efforts in this line, and they display fully the characteristics by which his later alterations were to be distinguished. Most of them will be found in his own edition. One of them he induced Theobald to adopt; two or three others, the saner intellect of that editor refused to allow insertion into the text, though he recorded them in the notes. There are some of them, however, that he could persuade no one else to adopt, nor did he adopt them himself finally. Hence they have never found record. The following are the emendations in the order in which they appeared in print, — the generally received text being first given and under it the proposed change.

Warburton's Letter of March 22, 1729.

1. Like the formal vice, iniquity.
   Like the formal wise antiquity.
   Richard III., act iii., scene 1.

2. Power i' the truth o' the cause.
   Power in the ruth of the laws.
   Coriolanus, act iii., scene 3. 1, 17.

3. Present fears
   Are less than horrible imaginings.

   Present feats
   Are less than horrible imaginings.
   Macbeth, act i., scene 3. 1, 137.

4. What! are men mad? Hath nature given them eyes
   To see this vaulted arch, and the rich crop
   Of sea and land, which can distinguish 'twixt
   The fiery orbs above and the twinned stones
   Upon the numbered beach?

What ! are men mad? Hath nature given them eyes
To see this vaulted arch and the rich cope
Of sea and land, which can distinguish 'twixt
The fiery orbs above and astroit stones
Upon the humbled beach?

Cymbeline, act i., scene 6. l 3

5. Prologue to the omen coming on.
Prologue to the ominous coming on.

Hamlet, act i., scene 1 (in quartos).

Warburton's Letter of April 8, 1729.

6. When we fall,
We answer others' merits in our name,
Are therefore to be pitied.

When we fall
We answer : others merits, in our names,
Are therefore to be pitied.

Antony and Cleopatra, act v., scene 2. l 17

7. Dido and her Æneas shall want troops.
Dido and her Sichaeus shall want troops.

Ibid. act iv., scene 14. l 5

8. Embarquements all of fury.
Embarments all of fancy.

Coriolanus, act i., scene 10. l. 2

Warburton's Letter of April 18, 1729.

9. His silver skin laced with his golden blood.
His silver skin laqued with his golden blood.

Macbeth, act ii., scene 3. l. 10

10. The dead men's blood, the privy [pining] maidens' groans.
The dead men's blood, the prived maidens' groans.

Henry V., act ii., scene 4.

The reading in 'Cymbeline' of *astroit* for *twinned*, Warburton seems to have abandoned of his own accord. Not so with *laqued* for *laced*. He gave as a reason for it that "laque is a kind of varnish of a ruddy color, used to lay upon leaf-silver and white metals to give them a golden tincture." Theobald, to whom he communicated this emendation in a letter, did not deny the fact of this use, though he probably disbelieved it; but he assured his friend that the emendation was altogether too *recherchée*.[1] Warburton apparently did not insist upon it. To the last, however, he stuck to his substitution of *Sichæus* for *Æneas*. Hanmer, he induced to insert it into the text; but on this point Theobald was obdurate, though he was complaisant enough to let him give in the notes his reasons for the proposed change.

Finally, it may be said that nothing shows more distinctly the essential difference in the characters of the two men than the course taken by each with regard to these published letters. With all his bravado Warburton had not the least inclination to come out openly as the critic of Pope, still less as the assailant of his actions. He saw to it that his light should be hid under a bushel. "As to the three printed criticisms," wrote Theobald, "with which you obliged me and the public, it is a very reasonable caution that what is gleaned from them should come out anonymous; for I should be loth to have a valued friend subjected, on my account, to the outrages of Pope, virulent though impotent."[2] He was accordingly careful to preserve

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 523.

[2] Letter of Nov. 18, 1731, Nichols, vol. ii. p. 621.

Warburton from the suspicion of having anything to do with these letters. The change of "formal vice, iniquity" into "formal wise antiquity" he would not receive into his text; but he gave a long note in defence of it, taken from the letter to the 'Daily Journal,' but attributed to an "anonymous corrector."[1] So also Warburton's attack upon Pope for his "short nooky isle of Albion" is printed; but to the note is appended, not the name of the author, but simply "Anonymous."[2]

Warburton lived to attach himself to the man of whom he had here spoken worse than ever did Theobald, or indeed any of the writers satirized in 'The Dunciad.' For many years, in consequence, he must have always had an uneasy feeling that the knowledge of the authorship of these letters might come to light. Had Theobald been a man of the same nature as the poet or as himself, they would surely have been exhumed from the files of forgotten newspapers and spread diligently before the eyes of men. But Warburton doubtless felt confident that he could trust in a high-mindedness which he himself did not possess, and that his secret would not be betrayed. Still, he could hardly have failed to experience a sense of relief when with the death of Theobald died perhaps the only other person besides himself who was acquainted with the authorship of these letters.

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iv. p. 446.
[2] Ibid. p. 48.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ALLIES OF POPE

WARBURTON'S letters disclose a very common state of mind which existed in regard to 'The Dunciad,' at the time of its first appearance. It characterized many who, like him, had not been made the subject of its attack. They were so outraged by the virulence and injustice of the piece that they failed to appreciate its greatness. Whatever opinion men might entertain about the malice which had inspired it, whatever disgust they might feel at its occasional coarseness and indecency, it was folly to deny that it exhibited not merely wit, but at times poetical passages of the highest order. The existence of these would be sure to cause it to be remembered and read by posterity, long after the controversies in which it had originated and the persons who were concerned in them, had been forgotten. It is, however, a singular fact that he who has just been found here denouncing the work as a disgrace to the good sense, politeness, and humanity of Great Britain should have become the one largely instrumental, according to his own account, in prevailing upon Pope to execute the unhappy recast of the poem, which, while preserving all its worst features, has distinctly impaired its excellence as a work of art and

has largely deprived it of its interest for succeeding generations.

It is clear from the facts recorded in the preceding chapter that at the outset Theobald had no lack of friends, and indeed of influential friends. Men might enjoy the wit and the personalities of Pope's satire, but that was something quite different from regarding it with sympathy and approval. Most of them knew then, what almost every one has forgotten now, that in the reviving of old controversies and in the setting on foot of new ones he had been on this occasion distinctly the aggressor. Most of them also then recognized clearly that it was the blow inflicted upon his self-love by a perfectly just criticism that was the occasion, if not the cause, of the outburst of wrath which had produced 'The Dunciad.' Even those who accepted religiously Pope's view that he was acting simply on the defensive, deplored the method he had taken to carry on his warfare. From Rome, Lyttelton sent him in 1730 an epistle in verse, in which he paid the highest possible tribute to his greatness as a poet. None the less did he urge him to refrain from staining "the glory of his nobler lays" by writing satire. "Formed to delight, why strivest thou to offend?" are words of his appeal. Pope was pleased with the praise, but had no disposition to follow the advice. He knew better than Lyttelton where his strength lay. But the belief in his assailing numerous persons without provocation was widely prevalent. It was entertained by men who were far from being ill-disposed towards him personally. A very general sentiment was expressed

by Swift's friend, Dr. Delany, in a letter to Sir Thomas Hanmer. "I am surprised," he wrote, "Mr. Pope is not weary of making enemies."[1]

For a long time, in consequence, Pope was fighting a solitary battle. So far was he from having it all his own way, as is now commonly stated, against the authors he had attacked that many months passed before a single voice was lifted up publicly in his defence. The fact was made the subject of comment by Fenton in a letter written more than a year after the original publication of 'The Dunciad.' He had visited London in the summer of 1729. There he had met Pope, and sent to Broome a report of the situation as it was after the quarto edition had appeared. "The war," he wrote, "is carried on against him fiercely in pictures and libels, and I heard of nobody but Savage and Cleland who have yet drawn their pens in his defence."[2] This was the same as saying that nobody had taken up Pope's quarrel but Pope himself. It was pretty well known then, and is perfectly well known now, that Savage and Cleland were mere dummies, who signed what he dictated or wrote what he inspired. Fenton may have been unaware of the fact; but he was plainly not heart-broken over the news he communicated.

But this was a condition of things which could not continue. No great writer fights long single-handed. Like every man of genius Pope was certain to have eventually a band of volunteers, proud to range them-

[1] Letter of Dr. Delany to Hanmer, Dec. 23 (1731), in 'Hanmer Correspondence,' p. 217.

[2] Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 154, letter of Fenton to Broome, June 24 (1729).

selves under his banner, ready to wage war in his behalf in the way that best suited their disposition or befitted their character. It was merely a question of time when they would come to his aid. In the years that followed they came to his aid in increasing numbers. Some of them were animated by that admiration and reverence which genius always inspires in generous minds. These addressed him in laudatory epistles. They paid glowing tributes to his moral character as well as to his intellectual greatness, for they believed in all sincerity that he was actuated by the noble sentiments he professed. But these writers contented themselves with eulogizing the poet and the man; they did not feel it incumbent upon them to assail his enemies; or if they did so, indulged only in general reflections without specific illustrations. One of the most noticeable in this last-mentioned class was Young, who, according to contemporary reports, hesitated for some time on which side to range himself. In January, 1730, he published two poetical epistles addressed to Pope on the authors, or rather the scribblers, of the age; but he attacked them in a body, he mentioned no names. In a sense he may be said to have reflected the sentiment attributed to Swift that a poor poet was an enemy to mankind, — an opinion which, if true, would hardly have the effect of causing Swift himself to be reckoned among its very ardent friends. But the high moral tone pervading these epistles of Young was, under the circumstances, more calculated to excite amusement than carry conviction. It was somewhat comic to find the heinous crime of writing for money,

and not for immortality, dwelt upon by the dependent pensioner of the opulent and great, who had celebrated in terms of grossest adulation the virtues of the most notorious social and political profligates of the age.

Homage of this sort, though grateful to Pope, was not enough. Besides having himself celebrated, he wished his enemies assailed. When once the fact became apparent, men were found eager to furnish this kind of support. Around him in consequence gathered a body of retainers, several of whom, though very far from being dunces, he would have been the first to stigmatize as such had they been enrolled in the ranks of his foes. They stood ready to do for him any work, no matter how despicable, in order to gain his favor or to receive his bounty. They were prepared to join in the hue and cry he raised against any one whom he had a desire to harm. They were in some cases willing to assume the authorship of whatever he wrote, which for any reason he was disinclined to publish as his own production. As the Shakespearean quarrel was but one of a number of controversies in which Pope was concerned, it is not surprising to find that Theobald is not even mentioned in some of these pieces. Welsted attacking in turn, was more constantly an object of attack. But an intenser and bitterer animosity was displayed by Pope, and re-echoed by his partisans, against James Moore-Smythe than against any other single person. As it was out of all proportion to any offence alleged to have been committed, it is manifest that some other reasons than the ones ordinarily given existed for

the peculiar virulence of the hatred entertained and displayed.

It is only with those who concerned themselves with the actors in the Shakespearean controversy that we have to do here. Still of these there was a goodly number. A few of them were respectable but somewhat shadowy nonentities like William Cleland, whose name has already been given as appended to the Letter to the Publisher prefixed to the quarto of 1729. Others possessed more positive qualities. A quotation has been furnished on a previous page from a work of the Reverend James Miller, who achieved a doubtful success as a playwright and an undoubted failure as a clergyman. It was entitled 'Harlequin Horace' and was published in February, 1731. In this the author not only indulged in fulsome praise of Pope, but seconded Pope's attacks upon several of his enemies. Naturally Theobald did not escape. Miller, seemingly unconscious of his own status, spoke of him as belonging to that middling class of poets for whom neither gods nor men have respect. Still, he was assured that if he had only stuck to being a pettifogger, he might have turned out a dabster at that trade.[1]

It was incidentally a result of the publication of Pope's satire that for a while the epithet of 'dunce' came to be adopted as a usual, if not the usual, term of abuse which every writer, no matter how contemptible his own abilities, felt justified in applying to his opponent.

[1] In the 'Dictionary of National Biography' Miller is credited with two pieces, 'Vanelia,' and 'Mister Taste, the Poetical Fop,' an attack on Pope. With neither of these did he have anything to do.

If it could be used effectively against a man who had shown himself the acutest of commentators, there was no reason why it should not be extended to any one whom it was for the interest of his adversary to disparage. It is the hero of the poem who has mainly suffered in the estimation of later generations from the employment of the term. To some, though to a less extent, this was the case in his own time. The men who hastened to array themselves on the side of Pope affected to regard Theobald as pre-eminently the dunce. For them he typified the class, and his name was deemed sufficient to denote it.

One of the most singular of the early examples of this sort of reference to him can be found in a poem of Paul Whitehead's. It was entitled 'The State Dunces' and was duly dedicated to Pope. Whitehead aimed at no such low game as men of letters or scholars. He hated the administration, and above all, the man at the head of it. Accordingly, this versifier found great satisfaction in likening Sir Robert Walpole to Theobald. The comparison he made is a striking illustration of the recklessness with which the charge of dulness was then flung about; but it is also evidence of the extent to which the assertions in regard to individuals made in 'The Dunciad' had come to be religiously accepted by the adherents of Pope. It was in the following way that this feeble poetaster assailed one of the ablest of English prime-ministers:

> "Amidst the mighty dull, behold how great
> An Appius swells, the Tibbald of the state."

It must be admitted that a peculiar ill-fortune has been the lot of the greatest of early Shakespearean commentators. It was hard to be called dull by a man of genius; it has been Theobald's fate to be called dull by successive generations of dullards.

But of all these volunteer assistants the one of whom Pope made special use was Richard Savage. It is hardly right to call him a volunteer; from the beginning he was pretty certainly in regular pay. There was nothing he was unwilling to do in order to be able to style himself a friend of Pope and to be supported by his bounty. Savage is in truth one of the most despicable creatures that England has upon her roll of authors. A villain of genius will have attached to his personality a certain interest. But Savage was not possessed of genius. He was merely a clever writer who was one of the earliest and most successful in getting the trick of Pope's manner. What he lacked in genius, however, he made up in impudence, self-conceit, and mendacity. By nature a scoundrel, by profession a versifier, by inclination a libeller, he rose on one occasion to the dignity of a murderer. Unfortunately for his reputation, after having been convicted and sentenced to death, he was pardoned. Accordingly, he lived long enough to display to the world the whole scope of his abilities and the full baseness of his character. Had he been hanged he might still be regretted, not for what he was, but for what it could be supposed he might have been.

All his achievements in other fields yield, however, to the splendid effrontery with which he fastened him-

self upon a woman of high position who had been notoriously unfaithful to her husband. Born in humble circumstances somewhere, he perhaps did not know where, of some persons he perhaps did not know whom, he set out to provide himself with a satisfactory parentage of his own. He fixed upon the divorced Countess of Macclesfield as his mother, and insisted that he was her child by her noble paramour, Richard Savage, Earl Rivers. To us there is something exceedingly comic in the impudent audacity of this adventurer. To the woman herself it was almost tragic. She paid dearly for her criminality. Disavow as much as she might the claim of this brazen impostor, she could never escape from his relentless pursuit. She was persecuted during life; she was followed by obloquy after life had ceased. On her death in 1753 the story of the diabolical malice she had manifested towards her unfortunate son was rehashed in the periodical literature of the time.[1] As late as 1777, when Savage's tragedy of 'Sir Thomas Overbury' was revived at Drury Lane, much fresh comment on the astonishing heartlessness and cruelty of this unnatural mother was once more set in motion in order to excite the interest of the public in the play and thereby increase the audience at the theatre.[2]

To Savage himself this particular lie was the happiest invention to which his mind, teeming with fictitious narratives about himself, ever gave birth. He worked it for its full value, and met with a degree of success

[1] *E. g.*, Gentleman's Magazine, vol. xxxii. pp. 491, 523. See also the same magazine for 1781, p. 420.

[2] *E. g.*, London Magazine, vol. xlv. p. 70, Feb. 1777.

which even in his wildest dreams he could hardly have anticipated. His story was received as true by several persons of influence. It furnished Aaron Hill an opportunity to display the abounding generosity of his nature and his corresponding lack of sense. Still, his enthusiastic advocacy of the impostor's cause was probably not so effective with the public as Pope's nominal acceptance of his claim. Not unlikely the poet in his inmost heart disbelieved it; but he felt no objection to bestow upon Savage the cheap form of alms which consists of an endorsement. In a note to 'The Dunciad' he recited a story about James Moore-Smythe which bears every mark of a lie framed out of the whole cloth. But of its truth there was pretendedly no doubt in Pope's mind, for the reason which he proceeded to give. It was "attested," he said, with great gravity, "by Mr. Savage, son of the late Earl Rivers."[1] With such a certificate to his birth it is no wonder that the "unnatural woman," upon whose life this phenomenal liar had fastened himself, should have played so prominent a part in the literature of the century.

On his part Savage took care that the story, after it had been launched in 1717, should never be withdrawn from the attention of the public. In the latter part of 1727, while he was lying under sentence of death, a catch-penny life came out, purporting to give some hitherto unpublished and "very remarkable circumstances relating to the birth and education of that unfortunate gentleman." In March, 1728, he was pardoned, and in the following month he celebrated

[1] Dunciad, quarto of 1729, Book 2, line 46; in modern editions, line 50.

himself in a poem called 'The Bastard.' On its title-page it was said to have been written by a son of the late Lord Rivers, and it was "inscribed with all due reverence to Mrs. Brett, once countess of Macclesfield." This is far from being the only instance in which he paid his respects to the mother he had adopted. In that and in succeeding publications he took advantage of every opportunity that arose to procure sympathy for himself by proclaiming through the length and breadth of the land his tale of woe, and by inveighing against the cruelty, in disowning him, of the person he had selected from among the frail women of England to bear the reproach of having brought him into being. During the greater part of his career he lived and thrived upon his bastardy. He was as anxious to parade it before the public as others are to keep the fact concealed.

The truth is that Savage lied so energetically, so persistently, so profusely that it is not impossible he came in time to believe his own story. To a large extent he caused it to be believed by others, especially by members of the literary class, who spread it far and wide. Men in consequence were led to pity and to relieve him, till they came to know him well, when disgust for the meaner pride which followed the mean fawning invariably took the place of compassion. Yet he gained the success with which a lie, cleverly concocted and stuck to unflinchingly, sometimes rewards the perpetrator. He obtained the favor of a queen. The story of his career has been embalmed in our literature by a man of genius who strove to put the best face he could upon what he himself was clearly compelled

to regard as a dubious character and to make the best apology in his power for what in his secret heart he could not but deem a discreditable life. His own honest belief in the lying pretences of this adventurer, his undoubting faith in the falsehoods the latter chose to tell him of his career, gave them vogue with his contemporaries, and have partially secured their acceptance with posterity. After Savage had ended his worthless existence in prison where he should have spent his life, his death was bewailed as a loss to letters. Never was regret more wasted. Had he, in those days of liberal hanging, met the fate he deserved, English literature would never have missed a poem worth preserving for itself or a line worth remembering.

This was the man who was at the time and had been for some years in Pope's service. The poet found him a useful tool. One redeeming virtue he had in the eyes of his patron. It was a virtue of the intellect, and not of the soul; but so far as it went, it was sincere. He was a genuine admirer of Pope. Upon his writings he modelled his own style; and whatever merit there is in his verses is due to his success in imitating the man he regarded as his master. Furthermore, he had one qualification, or rather lacked one qualification which made him eminently fit for the duties he was called upon to perform. He was not embarrassed by the possession of the slightest moral scruple. This fact, advantageous as it was in certain ways, was believed to have led his patron not infrequently into mistake. There was certainly a general impression that Savage reported to Pope what he could hear; and if he could hear noth-

ing, what he could invent. An early distinct allusion to him of this sort appears in a remark of Concanen in his Dedication to the Author of 'The Dunciad,' prefixed to the collection of pieces which had been produced by the publication of the 'Miscellanies.' Mention was there made of the spies and informers with whom Pope had the weakness to associate. These, when they could not furnish him with real intelligence, were obliged to keep up his opinion of their diligence by conjectures and inventions. Hence it had happened that many who had never cast any reflections upon the poet had been assailed in his satire; while others who had been foremost in proceedings of this sort had escaped.

There is plenty of evidence as to the suspicion entertained of Savage as a tale-bearer and betrayer of the confidence of his friends, though some at first were disposed to give him the benefit of the doubt. Among these latter was Cooke. When in 1725 he brought out his 'Battle of the Poets,' he represented Dennis, while ranging over the field, as seeing approach

"The form of one that was or seemed a spy."

The seeming spy was held up; but to the redoubtable critic, Savage cleared himself from suspicion. The excuse he gave was accepted and he was even dismissed with praise. But when the recast of this same poem appeared in 1728 his reputation for rascality had become pretty thoroughly established among his previous associates. No quarter was shown him in consequence. This time the critic sees

"The form of one that seemed and was a spy."

Before the uplifted cane of Dennis, Savage confesses his character, his employment by Pope, his conduct towards those who placed their trust in his honor:

> "Before a friend professed they know no fear,
> But trust their secrets to a faithless ear;
> I watch their motions and each word they say;
> And all, and more than all I know, betray;
> In kind return he cheers my soul with praise,
> And mends, when such he finds, my feeble lays." [1]

The belief about the peculiar relations existing between Savage and Pope is not unfrequently alluded to in various publications of the period, and sometimes directly asserted. 'The Dunciad Variorum' was followed the next month by a reply called 'The Curliad.' This owed its existence, as might be inferred, to the publisher from whose name it received its designation. On the title-page was the following amiable reference to Savage and his intimacy with Pope:

> "O may his soul still fret upon the lee,
> And nought attune his lyre but bastardy.
> May unhanged Savage all Pope's hours enjoy,
> And let his spurious birth his pen employ."

This belief did not die out with the progress of time; in fact it continued until the man, whose presence could not be endured in London, was induced to go into a temporary exile from which, to the undoubted relief of his acquaintances, he never returned.

There is a very forcible exhibition of the attitude taken in this matter by Pope's adversaries as late as

[1] Cooke's 'Tales, Epistles, Odes,' etc., ed. of 1729, p. 132.

1735. In writing satire Savage followed in the footsteps of his master; and as satire does not necessitate the possession of the highest poetic mood, he accomplished in it the best work he ever did. A poem of this nature came from his pen in 1735 and was entitled 'The Progress of a Divine.' It brought him into conflict with Henley. In his weekly paper the latter stated with precision the relations which were certainly believed by large numbers to exist between the writer of the satire and his poetic patron. "Richard Savage, Esq.," he wrote, "was the Jack-all of that ass in a lion's skin; he was his provider; like Montmaur, the parasite of Paris, he rambled about to gather up scraps of scandal as a price for his Twickenham ordinary; no purchase, no pay; no tittle-tattle, no dinner. Hence arose those Utopian tales of persons, characters and things, that raised by the clean hands of this Heliconian scavenger the dunghill of 'The Dunciad.'[1]

It was this man who was nominally responsible for a prose piece which followed immediately upon the publication of 'The Dunciad Variorum.' It was a pamphlet styled 'An Author to be Let' — a title by which Savage appropriately, if unconsciously, described himself. It was full of the grossest personal attacks upon the men whom Pope regarded as his adversaries — Dennis, Roome, Ralph, Moore-Smythe, Concanen, Welsted, and others. It bears throughout the marks of Pope's inspiring mind, and his connection with it went sometimes much further than inspiration. In fact no small number of the remarks contained in it were adopted by

[1] The Hyp-Doctor, No. 232, April 29, 1735.

him in later editions of 'The Dunciad.' Some even are found in the edition which had appeared about a month before. The publisher's preface in particular can be said with reasonable certainty to have come from the hand of the poet. Given in that was an account of the origin and occupation of various writers of the time. Dennis was the son of a saddler. Morley had a younger brother who blacked shoes at the corner of a street. Roome was the son of an Anabaptist undertaker. Cooke was the son of a Muggletonian teacher who kept a little obscure ale-house at Braintree in Essex. Attacks of this sort coming from the son of a linen-draper and put in the mouth of a professed bastard are considered by some to be exceedingly crushing.

In this publication Theobald did not occupy a specially prominent place. There are to him but two references; unless we consider as such a possible allusion to the posthumous works of Wycherley which were to appear in a few months under his editorship. Like the rest, however, his occupation came in for a scoring. "Why would not Mr. Theobald continue an attorney? Is not word-catching more serviceable in splitting a cause than in explaining a fine poet?" He was spoken of again in the main piece. In this, which purported to be the confessions of Iscariot Hackney, the writer pretends to disclose the dirty practices of all sorts in which he has been concerned. Among other things he remarks that he has "penned panegyrics in 'Mist' on Rich's pantomimes and Theobald's 'Shakespear Restored.'"

This pamphlet it was clearly the original intention to follow up with others of a similar character. It appeared on the title-page as No. 1. But it never had a successor, though on the occasion of Welsted and Smythe's Epistle to Pope, one was once threatened.[1] It itself, however, was reprinted later. But it was manifestly too cumbrous to accomplish the objects which Pope had in view, and his indefatigable activity soon led him to resort to other measures. In his public utterances he always made it a rule to speak disdainfully of the newspapers. In particular, no one ever pretended to hold in more contempt than he the party organs on each side. But no one also was more keenly alive to the advantage of using these same publications in his own interest. It is not easy to say to what extent the articles which appeared in them during the year 1729 were written by himself, or by others under his supervision or at his instigation, or were the voluntary effusions of unknown admirers. But occasionally his hand can be directly traced, though it is needless to add that he took care that any positive evidence that he had an actual part in the controversies should not be forthcoming.

In the very same number of 'Mist's Journal'[2] which contained the letter signed W. A., which he so bitterly resented, there appeared a communication which owed to him its inspiration, and in all probability, its actual composition. The conductor of the paper inserted both

[1] See advertisements in 'Grub-street Journal,' May 27, June 4, June 11, and June 18, 1730.

[2] June 8, 1729.

these articles as representing the two different sides of the controversy then going on, and introduced them with the assertion that he himself was not concerned in the quarrel which had led to the dire division then distracting the empire of wit, and that he intended to preserve a strict neutrality. The communication in Pope's interest was a pretendedly official account of a meeting of the general court of the Knights of the Bathos, with a report of their proceedings and the resolutions they had adopted. It was signed by "J. M. S., Speaker." There are several allusions in this pretended report which it would perhaps be impossible now to explain. The whole, however, clearly expressed the poet's belief about certain persons and their doings, or at any rate his suspicions. The general object of the meeting, according to it, was to suppress the exorbitant power of the Pope. One of the resolutions ordered the composition of a key to 'The Dunciad.' This was to be prepared by Mr. C——k (?Cooke) and to be published by Mr. C——l (Curll). Further a committee of secrecy was appointed consisting of Mr. M., Mr. A. H., Mr. W., Mr. D. and the Rev. Mr. W. Most, if not every one of the persons indicated by these initials can be identified. The Rev. Mr. W. was probably Woolston. The authorship of the articles written by Warburton was certainly not known. He was then dwelling at a long distance from London, and had not in all probability been even heard of at that time by the poet.

Other pieces appeared in the newspapers on Pope's side during the course of this year. Some of them

exhibit his peculiar vein, but it would be unjustifiable to attribute them to him merely on the ground of internal evidence of this nature. Among them, however, is a curious article which came out in 'Mist's Journal'[1] three weeks after the publication in that paper of Theobald's proposals for amending Shakespeare. This purported to be an attempt at the correction of the song of the hunting in 'Chevy Chase,' revised by the indefatigable pains of T. F., Gentleman. Its aim was to render perfect a poem which was described as being unquestionably the masterpiece in our language. The writer professed that he had no intention whatever to meddle with its meaning, but only "to touch the genuine lection," and thereby give the work in its first perfection. This was one of Pope's favorite phrases in commenting upon Theobald's labors, and the pretended emendations caricatured the method adopted by that editor. Still as his method was exactly the same as that of all scholars, the article which ostensibly purported to come, and perhaps actually came from Cambridge University, may have been aimed at Bentley.

But none of these agencies sufficed. During the whole of the year 1729 Pope was fighting single-handed. The men who were later to take up his cause had not at this time come forward. It is clear that for a while he felt his solitariness. The favor with which attacks upon him were received by the public tended to dispirit him. At times jubilant, at other times he seems to have been almost awed by the hostility he had evoked, and was disposed to abandon all controversy and satire. He

[1] July 13, 1729, No. 169.

told Fenton in June of this year that for the future he intended to write nothing but epistles after the manner of Horace.[1] To epistles of this sort he certainly henceforth devoted himself largely. But the strong bent of his nature could not be overcome. Even in the 'Moral Essays' he produced, the satirical element was sure to introduce itself, and in some became the predominant feature. Nor in truth could Pope have failed to recognize more and more distinctly, as time passed on, that satire was a species of composition in which he was signally fitted to excel; and though the consequent propensity to indulge in it got him occasionally into troubles out of which he wriggled with difficulty, yet these annoyances were more than counterbalanced by the reputation he acquired with all, and the dread he inspired in many.

The attacks upon him in the press after the publication of the quarto of 1729 were persistent. They took usually the form of short paragraphs or epigrams, as well as that of letters such as those which have been given as coming from Warburton. To one whose sensitiveness to criticism amounted almost to a disease, they were peculiarly galling. The newspapers were indeed open to him also, directly or indirectly; but frequent resort to them rested under fatal objections. He could not say in them as much as he wished or what he wished without appearing in person. To a man occupying his position before the public no amount of space would have been denied. But that very position rendered it impossible for him to engage in controversy. Had it

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 154, letter of Fenton to Broome, June 24.

been otherwise, a course of conduct of this sort was one to which he would have been utterly averse. He wished to strike his enemies, real or fancied; but he wished at the same time to remain himself in darkness.

Furthermore, while the columns of the newspapers were accessible to him, they were also accessible to his opponents. He wanted an organ which would be wholly his own, which should defend him and assail his foes, but in which he himself would appear to have no hand. In such a journal he could deal his blows at pleasure, and yet disclaim responsibility for any statements he made or any harm he wrought. An undertaking of this character it seemed difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish. It is another proof of the consummate craft which Pope evinced in threading the devious paths he laid out that he accomplished this apparently impossible task; that he carried through for years an enterprise originated in his behalf, devoted mainly to furthering his interests, and yet all the while remained concealed in the background, suspected indeed, but not positively known. On Thursday, the eighth of January, 1730, appeared the first number of his organ, a weekly paper entitled 'The Grub-street Journal.' It lasted for eight years. In 1738 it was succeeded by another, entitled 'The Literary Courier of Grub Street,' which lingered for a few months and then expired.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GRUB-STREET JOURNAL

THE origin of the 'Grub-street Journal' is wrapt in a mystery, or rather a mystification, which it is perhaps hopeless to expect will ever be fully dispelled. This is true at all events of many of its details. The accuracy of statements that may, and indeed must be made of Pope's connection with it is rendered incapable of absolute demonstration in consequence of the secrecy in which he shrouded all his operations. Though the moving spirit that planned it, that informed it, and gave it direction, he took care to keep himself as far as possible from being in any way identified with it. His words about it imply ignorance where they do not expressly assert it; for he was capable when hard pressed of disavowing, or of seeming to disavow, that he had any hand whatever in its conduct. He could even affect to disapprove of it; and at one time went so far as to apply to it, as did every one else, the epithet "low."

The result of this purposed concealment has been that until a very late period Pope's relations to this journal have either been ignored altogether or have been treated as possessed of but little significance. His earlier biographers, Ayre, Ruffhead, Dr. Johnson,

Joseph Warton and Roscoe, so far from mentioning the paper, are seemingly unaware of its existence. It has not been until comparatively recent years that much beyond suspicion has been expressed that Pope had any interest in it whatever. A half-century ago Carruthers gave a brief but fairly accurate account, so far as it went, of his contributions to the journal. Yet the revelations then made seem to have wrought little effect upon later writers. Even at the present day, when a knowledge of the poet's tortuous practices has become the common property of all students of English literature, there is sometimes displayed a curious shrinking from the conclusions to which the evidence almost inevitably leads. The admission is made, in a guarded if not grudging way, that the 'Grub-street Journal' was a paper for which he occasionally wrote. There are indeed modern lives of the poet in which, no more than in the early ones, is there even so much as an allusion to its existence.

In spite of intentional mystification and occasional affected denial, enough evidence still can be found fairly to compel the belief that it was mainly to Pope that the 'Grub-street Journal' owed its conception and creation. Without the promised aid of his pen, and in all probability without actual contributions from his purse, the paper could not and would not have been set on foot. Never was a work of this sort undertaken more distinctly in the interests of one man. It had little reason for its existence save to celebrate the poet and to assail the writers he disliked or hated. To these objects it was mainly devoted during the earliest years

of its being. Not merely was its animus unmistakable, but the manner of its manifestation was as unmistakably Pope's. It reflected his views of everything and everybody. It praised the men he praised and reviled the men of whom he disapproved. The former were the Parnassians; the latter were the Grubæans, the Knights of the Bathos, the gentlemen of the Dunciad. These were subjected to attacks of every kind, ranging all the way from virulent and unrestrained vituperation to sneering depreciation or intentional misrepresentation. Articles assailing his enemies or supposed enemies found always an eager welcome. Foes long dead were dragged from their graves to be gibbeted in its columns. The moment any new person presented himself who expressed some derogatory opinion of the poet's writings or of his conduct, he was at once singled out for disparagement, if not for calumny.

Furthermore, whatever praise was bestowed, outside of that lavished on Pope himself and his immediate friends, was reserved for those who came forward in his defence; and the degree of commendation they received was largely proportioned to the degree of virulence they had displayed in railing at his opponents, or to the degree of their ardor in eulogizing himself. Special attention was given to such pieces, comments were made upon them, extracts were taken from them, and little limit was there to the praise they received. Now and then the way for their favorable reception was paved beforehand. Walter Harte, for instance, brought out in January, 1731, a poem on Pope's side,

entitled 'An Essay on Satire, particularly on The Dunciad.' Its utter commonplaceness was counterbalanced in the poet's eyes by the fulsome flattery it heaped upon him and his work. It had been seen by him while in process of preparation. Months before it came out a specimen of it was published in the 'Grub-street Journal'[1] as a portion of a poem as yet unfinished, and the author was urged to go on and gratify the public with it in a completed form.

Still, Pope's efforts to conceal his connection with the 'Grub-street Journal' not merely imposed upon the men who came after him, they imposed perhaps upon the large majority of his contemporaries. Though the fact was early suspected by the indifferent and openly asserted by the hostile, it was pretty certainly never believed at the time by the great body of his readers and admirers, especially after his apparent denial. From the outset he took pains to produce the impression that he had nothing to do with it whatever. "I have just seen The Grub-Street Journal," he wrote to Lord Oxford, "and disapprove it."[2] This statement was made four months after the paper had been set on foot. He meant to have his correspondent understand that this was the first time he had seen the periodical itself; he left himself a loophole out of which to crawl, in case of necessity, in the interpretation that could be put upon his words that it was this particular number of it which he had just seen.

Yet in this very number there was printed a commu-

[1] No. 24, June 18, 1730.

[2] Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 268, letter of May 17, 1730.

nication from Pope himself, though it was introduced as having been sent "by an unknown hand."[1] It was an attack upon the preface to the just published epistle in verse which had been addressed to him by Welsted and Moore-Smythe. It was followed the week after by a further reply of his to the statements contained in the poem itself.[2] There are indeed plenty of articles in the earlier numbers of the 'Grub-Street Journal' which are unmistakably of Pope's composition and some which can be shown to be his by evidence other than internal. They ought strictly to be included in any complete edition of his works, though it must be admitted that the nature of several of them would render such a publication inadvisable. If shorn of their indecency they would lose all the interest they possess. The pieces indeed which Pope wrote from time to time but did not care to be held responsible for, would fill a volume respectable in size but not altogether savory in character.

One of these contributions he himself republished later, though in so doing he discarded about a fourth of it as it originally appeared. This was the article on the poet-laureateship. Eusden, the holder of that office, had died on September 27, 1730. In a number of the 'Grub-street Journal,' which appeared the following month, was an ironical dissertation on the coming election of his successor. It described the rites and ceremonies which, though too long discontinued, ought to be observed and the qualifications which should characterize the candidate to be chosen. The compara-

[1] No. 19, May 14, 1730.

[2] No. 20, May 21, 1730.

tive merits of Theobald, Dennis, and Cibber were subjected to a pretendedly grave examination. The article seemed to Pope too good to be let die unacknowledged. He therefore published it in the volume containing the pieces on his side occasioned by 'The Dunciad,' the editorship of which was fathered upon Savage. Later he included it among his authorized works. It is the only one of his contributions to the 'Grub-street Journal' which is retained in many modern editions purporting to be complete. Yet there is not the slightest question that all or nearly all the epigrams "in laud and praise of the gentlemen of 'The Dunciad,'" which appeared in the collection just mentioned, were of Pope's own composition. The same remark is true of the essays, letters, and other occasional pieces relating to the late war of the Dunces, found in the work. It was in this newspaper organ of his that most of these came out first. Several other of his contributions to it had a place in volumes of his writings that were published during his lifetime. Not a single modern edition, however, ventures to include all the pieces which their author then openly acknowledged by printing them among his works.

Even in printing among his acknowledged productions this piece on the laureateship Pope kept up his usual practice of deception. It had originally appeared in the number for November 19, 1730. When it was republished by him not long before his death, the date was changed to November 19, 1729. As in that year the 'Grub-street Journal' had not come into being, the inference necessarily followed that it was not in that

paper that the article had appeared. The falsification was in one sense a stupid one, it was so easy of detection. The 'Grub-street Journal' did not exist, to be sure, at the date specified; but Eusden, the laureate, did. Consequently the essay on the selection of his successor had no decent pretext for its own being. Clumsy, however, as was the attempt at deception, it sufficed then and has sufficed since. The year 1729 is found attached to this piece in all complete editions of the poet's works, with rarely an attempt in any of them to correct the falsehood in the place where the reader finds the article, and in most of them without an attempt to correct it anywhere.

The 'Grub-street Journal' purported to be the organ of an assumed Grubæan society. After a few numbers it set out to give a weekly account of its more important transactions. This was a continuation of the scheme of a regular report of the proceedings of the so-called Knights of the Bathos which had been earlier outlined in the article contributed to 'Mist's Journal.'[1] The headquarters of the society were represented as being at the sign of the Pegasus, vulgarly called the Flying Horse, in the street from which the paper derived its name. It affected to be devoted entirely to the interests of 'Grub-street' authors — 'Grub-street' authors being the comprehensive title given to all persons who were objects of Pope's animosity. Under the pretence of being their organ every possible opportunity was embraced of turning them and their productions into ridicule. The pretended secre-

[1] 'Mist's Journal,' June 8, 1728. See page 380.

tary of the pretended society, who took the name of Bavius, was the nominal editor. Political disquisitions were to be furnished by Mr. Quidnunc, and poetry by Mr. Poppy. The journal was at first printed for Roberts, a well-known publisher of the time; but after the fifteenth number his connection with it ceased, at least publicly, for a long period. In his place a fictitious Captain Gulliver was chosen as its bookseller; and his name remained affixed to the paper during all the numerous appearances and disappearances of other persons who were concerned in its publication and sale. Captain Gulliver was merely a pseudonym for Lawton Gilliver.

Like the other weeklies of the time the columns of the 'Grub-street Journal' were largely filled with short items of news, domestic or foreign, taken from the daily papers. It was, however, the great number of its essays, letters, and epigrams which caused it to stand out distinctly from among its fellows. The suspicion and sometimes the belief that Pope and his friends were contributors to its columns attracted attention to it from the beginning; and the pieces they wrote, virulent in tone and often witty as well as malignant, must have given it repute and circulation. They stood in sharpest contrast to the other contributions in which the ability to be sarcastic was in an inverse proportion to the desire. While these communications were directed mainly against the men who had incurred the poet's hostility, they sometimes attacked those towards whom he probably felt indifference. The paper early attained a somewhat unsavory pre-eminence among the periodicals of that day for the recklessness of its personalities

and the grossness of its scurrility. In its later career it achieved also the seemingly impossible task of being even more dull than it was abusive. Naturally it was in constant collision with its contemporaries, whether men or journals. Fielding, then engaged in the production of dramatic pieces, was a frequent subject of its attack. He in turn had no hesitation in expressing with great distinctness his opinion of the character and ability displayed in the conduct of the paper. In 'The Covent Garden Tragedy,' brought out in 1732, the procuress tells the pimp in her employ that having learned to read he has known how to write Grub-street Journals. Later he denounced the writers for it as a set of paltry, ill-natured, and ignorant scribblers without learning, without decency, and without common-sense.

Who was this nominal editor Bavius? Upon this point a certain degree of doubt exists. The modern biographers of Pope unite in conferring this position not upon one, but upon two persons. Mævius is joined by them with Bavius. Such was pretty certainly the case at the outset; but it did not continue so long. They all unite further in making one of these two the well-known botanist, John Martyn. It has indeed occasioned a good deal of surprise that a man whose life was mainly absorbed in the compilation of laborious scientific treatises should leave for a moment pursuits so congenial in order to take charge of a journal devoted largely to fulsome praise of Pope and persistent detraction of his adversaries. Nothing but the fervor of friendship combined with blindest admiration would apparently account for such a course; yet there exists

no evidence of any intimacy between the poet and the assumed editor. Not even does Martyn's name occur in Pope's correspondence. Yet there seems no doubt that for a time he was concerned in this journal. The fact was directly asserted by his son in the account he gave of his father's life. He, to be sure, clearly knew nothing of the circumstances attending the origin of the paper, which began its existence before he was born, and scarcely anything of its peculiar character. Still, he would not have said what he did without authority. Furthermore there are occasional references to Martyn in the contemporary papers with which the 'Grub-street Journal' came into conflict, notably Henley's 'Hyp-Doctor.' He was there designated as a botanist and a snail-picker. On one occasion there was a specific reference to "Mr. Gilliver's, Dr. Martin's and Mr. Russel's Weekly Productions."[1]

In 1737 appeared a work in two volumes entitled 'Memoirs of Grub-street.' It consisted of essays, letters, epigrams, and poems collected from the first one hundred and twenty-five numbers of this journal — that is, up to June, 1732. To it was prefixed what purported to be an account of the origin, history, and province of the paper. Incidentally it bore likewise hearty testimony to the noble motives by which all engaged in carrying it on had been actuated. Throughout no names were mentioned. The passages alluding to Pope and his connection with the paper, where they did not designedly give a wholly false impression, were couched in language the manifest intent of which was

[1] The Hyp-Doctor, No. 15, March 23, 1731.

to half hide and to half reveal the truth. No great faith can be placed in the trustworthiness of several of the assertions found in this preface. Still, as in some instances there was no motive to deceive, and certainly nothing to be gained by deceiving, certain of the statements made can be received with confidence in their correctness. It is an unavoidable inference from what was there said that Martyn gave up his interest in the paper at the end of a year and a half. After his retirement the conduct of the journal fell exclusively into the hands of the other editor, who seems indeed to have had the main charge of it from the beginning. He it is who gave the account of it which is contained in the preface just mentioned.

Modern biographers of Pope have adopted without question the statement made by Martyn's son that the one joined with his father in the conduct of this journal was Dr. Richard Russell. Richard Russell is the common name of two physicians who flourished at that time. The older and better known one was a graduate of Leyden and became a member of the Royal Society. In his day he attained considerable repute as the writer of a noted treatise on the curative effects of sea-water; and he took a prominent part in the efforts put forth to develop Brighton into a place of fashionable resort. The other physician was a graduate of Rheims, and practised his profession at Reading. He seems never to have been a man of much more than local repute; but in biographical dictionaries, even the most recent, and in various other works he has been constantly confounded with his more eminent namesake. It is these

two persons rolled into one who have been regularly represented as the other editor of the 'Grub-street Journal.' There seems no reason to believe that either of them had any connection whatever with the work. Neither of them was a resident of London; neither of them could have any conceivable interest in the undertaking.

At all events, if contemporary testimony can be trusted, the man who had the main charge of the 'Grub-street Journal' was not a physician, but a clergyman. Internal evidence leads to the same conclusion. Many of the articles which the paper published dealt with subjects which were more or less of a theological nature. Furthermore the dulness displayed in them was not the dulness of a layman, but that of an orthodox divine. The earliest references to the editor indicate, however, only the name, not the vocation. He was simply called Mr. Russel. In the secrecy which was then sought to be maintained even so much of an identification as this was not admitted. A contemporary periodical in the latter part of 1732 spoke of Russel as the author of the 'Grub-street Journal.' To this statement was given what appeared to be an official denial. "Mr. H's affirmation," it said, "that Mr. R. is the writer of the 'Grub' is not only false in itself, but likewise contrary to his own repeated assertions, in which he has ascribed this paper to several persons whom he has defamed with false and scandalous imputations; for which it is probable they may hereafter call him to account."[1]

[1] Grub-street Journal, No. 158, January 4, 1733.

There was always so much equivocation and evasion going on in the controversies of which Pope was the center, where there was not vigorous and straightforward lying, that no one can entertain a sense of much security in the inferences he draws from anything which has been said. Sentences are so concocted that while they seem to affirm unmistakably one thing they can be made unexpectedly to yield under pressure a meaning altogether different. Plain therefore as seem the words just given, one cannot be sure that they convey an actual denial. They may have lurking in them a subterfuge of some sort. But if intended as a denial they failed signally of their aim. Contemporary references continued to designate Russel — sometimes amiably terming him Runt Russel — as the editor. Later, not merely was the man made an object of attack, but also the profession. Early in 1733 Eustace Budgell started a periodical called the 'Bee.' In the first number he gave an account of his weekly contemporaries. In it he said that the person thought to be at the head of the 'Grub-street Journal' was "Mr. R——l, a nonjuring clergyman."[1] Toward the close of the year a bitter quarrel sprang up between the two papers. In the course of the controversy Budgell was wont to term his antagonist Parson Russel. Furthermore he went into particulars. He wrote and printed pointed personal letters to his rival in which he took care to give not only the name and occupation, but also the residence. The first of these was addressed to "Russel, a clergyman living in Smith's Square, near the Horse-

[1] The Bee, No. 1, Feb. 10, 1733, vol. i. p. 9.

Ferry, in Westminster, and the reputed author of the Grub-street Journal."[1] Information of a not altogether pleasing character was further imparted to him as to the estimation in which he was held. "We are informed," wrote Budgell, "that you are a parson; that you have but a mean fortune and no preferment; that not one of your neighbors either visits or esteems you, and that the only visible way you have of getting a livelihood is by taking some young gentlemen to board in your house who go to Westminster school."[2] In a letter in a later number the residence was fixed even more definitively as over against St. Ann's church in the same neighborhood.[3]

In this controversy Russel followed in the footsteps of Pope. Though he equivocated he never really denied that he was the editor of the paper. The charge was repeated with much more virulence and effect a year or so later by Aaron Hill and Popple in their paper called 'The Prompter.' There it was both assumed and asserted that he was the responsible conductor of the rival publication. That a man of his profession should be concerned in a work of this character was pronounced to be something peculiarly disreputable.[4] He was at times variously designated as the vicar of Grub-street,[5] as a mixture of priest and scavenger, as the reverend drayman at the Pegasus,[6] as the reverend

[1] The Bee, No. 41, Dec. 4, 1733, vol. iv. p. 72.
[2] Ibid. vol. iv. p. 75.
[3] Ibid. No. 52, Feb. 23, 1734, vol. iv. p. 550.
[4] The Prompter, No. 112, Dec. 5, 1735.
[5] Ibid. No. 107, Nov. 18, 1735, No. 111, Dec. 2.
[6] Ibid. No. 112, Dec. 5, 1735.

drayman of the Hebdomadalian dung-cart.[1] Nor was Pope's connection with it disregarded, though at the time the poet had published what might, by the unknowing, have been considered as an official denial of any such charge. Indeed Hill printed a copy of verses the first stanza of which may be said to give his opinion of the reasons which had led to the establishment of the journal in question, and of the person and methods that had been employed to carry it on:

> P——e, who oft o'erflows both with wit and with spleen,
> Felt the want of a dung-cart to keep himself clean:
> So he furnished a priest with a carriage, ding-dong:
> And made him his drayman to drive it along.[2]

Long before this time, however, Pope's connection with the journal had been made the subject of comment. In the very first year of its existence the fact had been intimated.[3] Later it was expressly asserted. Unquestionably the success the paper met with, whatever it may have been, was largely due to the impression that became widely prevalent that the poet and his friends were contributors to its columns. This was the statement definitely made a few years later by one of the rival weeklies. "The Grub-street Journal," it said, "is a paper that owed its whole prospect of success and reputation, at its first outset, to an opinion that was artfully circulated through the town that Mr. Pope and Dr. Arbuthnot were concerned in it as authors." It went on to say that had it not been for this belief

[1] The Prompter, No. 108, Nov. 21, 1735.
[2] Ibid. No. 107, Nov. 18, 1735.
[3] See a copy of verses in Fog's Weekly Journal, Nov. 7, 1730.

the publication would never have been regarded at all. "Nothing could have kept it alive so long," it concluded, "but the mere love of scandal, on which frailty it has hitherto subsisted, and the hope of something malicious one week to make amends for the dulness of another."[1] This was touching the editorial management in a very sore place. As the poet himself wrote to Caryll, the paper was very unequal.[2] Without the pieces written by himself and his friends the bitterest personalities in which it indulged could not impart to it interest. Certain it is that the editor who wrote under the name of Bavius approached altogether nearer the conception of that character than Pope did to that of Virgil.

It was Eustace Budgell, however, who was most distinct and emphatic in attributing to Pope a connection with this journal. In the controversy which his paper had with its contemporary, he charged him with being a regular contributor to its columns. He gave that as the reason for the rancor and hatred which it displayed to all mankind with the exception of one particular person. That was its poet, Mr. Poppy, who supplied it with libels in verse.[3] Budgell spoke contemptuously of the dread Pope affected to inspire by his "never-dying satires." He concluded one of his articles with a defiant challenge to "the little envious animal" who assailed him in the 'Grub-street Journal,' to set his own name to his scandalous verses. He con-

[1] The Weekly Register, June 1, 1734.
[2] Letter of Feb. 6, 1731, Pope's 'Works,' vol. vi. p. 329.
[3] The Bee, vol. iv. p. 75.

cluded with giving expression to what he termed a calm and judicial estimate of the poet's character. "We call him," he said, "a villain, upon a most mature and serious consideration, and without the least heat or passion."[1] Budgell's mind, long unsettled, had now become nearly upset. The attacks made upon him in the 'Grub-street Journal' after the death of Tindal he attributed to the instigation of Pope. At these and their supposed author he waxed half-frantic with wrath. It was intimated in these articles that the will leaving him a legacy of two thousand pounds had either been forged or that undue influence had been exerted over the testator in his dying moments. There had also appeared in the paper a copy of verses on the free-thinker. Hope was expressed in it that Tindal had gone to heaven. "'Tis said," continued the writer, "Budge sends him there."[2] This line taken in connection with one or two others, Budgell considered or affected to consider a charge that he had murdered the philosopher. There was in consequence little restraint in his denunciation of his supposed accuser.

Unquestionably Pope was profoundly irritated by the persistency with which Budgell dragged in his name in the controversy which the 'Bee' was carrying on with the 'Grub-street Journal.' It was all the more annoying because the main charge that he was the controlling power behind the management was distinctly true. There is indeed no probability that he had anything directly to do with the tedious, even if justifiable

[1] Grub-street Journal, p. 555, No. 52, Feb. 23, 1734.
[2] Ibid. No. 205, Nov. 29, 1733.

abuse, which was heaped upon Budgell; though it is not likely that it caused him protracted suffering. But if he was easily provoked to resentment, he knew how to bide his time. For more than a year he paid no attention to the constantly repeated statements that he had a chief hand in the conduct of the 'Grub-street Journal.' But in January, 1735, appeared the apology for his life which was published under the title of an 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.' In this most skilfully devised, as well as most brilliant of poems, Pope extolled his own self-restraint in maintaining a magnanimous silence under the series of persistent aspersions which had been cast upon his person, his morals, and his family. Slandered unceasingly, he had never condescended to reply. He specified a number of instances in which he had been libelled, but in which he had never opened his lips in his own defence. Then in one of those stinging couplets wherewith he was wont to impale his adversaries, he referred to the course he had adopted in reply to the charges which had been made in the 'Bee.' It was but another proof of the indifference he had invariably displayed to the calumnies with which he had been constantly pursued, that he had

> "Let Budgell charge low Grub-street on his quill,
> And write whate'er he please, except his will." [1]

The couplet was more than an insinuation that his critic had been guilty of the forgery of which he had been accused. It was intended to give the public the impression of a full denial of any connection on his own

[1] Lines 379–80.

part with the journal in question. But the charge had been made so frequently and so persistently, and it was itself under the circumstances so damaging, that he felt compelled to continue the consideration of the subject in plain prose. To the lines just given he appended the following note:

"Budgell, in a weekly pamphlet called the Bee, bestowed much abuse on him, in the imagination that he writ some things about the last will of Dr. Tindal in the Grub-street Journal; a paper wherein he never had the least hand, direction or supervisal, nor the least knowledge of its authors. He took no notice of so frantic an abuse; and expected that any man who knew himself author of what he was slandered for would have justified him on that article."

The unsuspecting reader will now, and at the time actually did, consider this note as an absolute denial of Pope's having ever had anything to do in any way with the 'Grub-street Journal.' Such an inference is natural; it seems indeed almost inevitable; and yet it betrays a lamentable state of ignorance as to the poet's practices. The attention of those familiar with his methods of procedure is at once arrested by the peculiar wording of this apparently unreserved disavowal of the least knowledge of the paper or of its editors. Pope lacked entirely the open, magnificent mendacity, captivating by its very audaciousness, of his great contemporary Voltaire. He sought to secure his results by carefully devised statements which would convey truth of a certain sort but not of the sort apparently conveyed. He couched his meaning in language which could be explained in a different sense from what men would ordinarily take it, if worst should come to worst. In the

mean time it would produce upon the mind of the unsuspicious reader an impression distinctly false, but also distinctly desirable to have him entertain. In this particular instance his words would seem a positive disclaimer of all the accusations brought against him of having any hand in the 'Grub-street Journal.' He further fell in with the general opinion in stigmatizing it as "low." But if ever confronted with the actual fact of his having contributed articles to it, he could insist that all he meant in this place was that he had had nothing to do with the pieces attacking Budgell in regard to Tindal's will, and that he had no knowledge of their authors.

The whole proceeding was curiously characteristic. While the ordinary reader would and did infer from his words that Pope indignantly repelled the assertion or insinuation that he had any connection whatever with the 'Grub-street Journal,' not even his worst enemy would care to insist, after the explanation that could be given, that the poet had actually lied. No matter how much he thought it, he would not feel like saying it. Indeed one revolts at any time from applying a word so brutal to the assertions of a man of genius, especially when so many other politer phrases can be used which convey precisely the same idea. Yet danger there always is, when considering Pope's conduct in any particular instance, of letting one's natural indignation at his course evaporate in the admiration one comes to feel for the boundless resource he exhibited in making misleading statements and evading any of their possible harmful consequences. Without say-

ing, therefore, as did Macaulay repeatedly, that Pope lied, it is permissible to declare that never was there a greater expert than he in all the varied forms in which mendacity disguises itself — in the half concealment which suggests the wholly false; in the evasion which keeps the letter of truth alive while smothering its spirit; in the misrepresentation which produces an utterly wrong impression of a fact in certain ways correctly stated; in the prevarication which designedly defeats the very ends it professedly seeks to advance; above all, in the ability to say seemingly one thing while leading the hearer or reader to believe that something directly contrary has been said. Naturally this method of proceeding has at times its disadvantages. Pope's further assertion in this same piece that he "thought a lie in verse and prose the same" exemplified the truth of one of the claims he made for himself in a way he did not intend. The lie about the 'Grub-street Journal' in the poetry was not at all distinct in essence from the lie about it in the prose note appended.

The pretended denial, however much it may have influenced the opinion of the multitude of readers, never affected the belief of those who were better informed. It did not prevent them from treating his connection with the 'Grub-street Journal' as an assured fact. It looks, however, as if Pope became weary, as time went on, of the paper, and was anxious to sever his connection with it entirely. Though it still remained his personal organ — as late as April, 1736, there appeared in it a denial coming from his own mouth of a re-

port about himself[1] — his contributions to it gradually ceased. It had served its purpose; for him its usefulness was practically gone. It had furnished him a comparatively secure fortress from behind whose ramparts of type he had been enabled to fling envenomed darts against his enemies at pleasure, while he himself remained unknown, and by the great mass of men even unsuspected. But the fortress was tending all the while to become insecure. The part he took in holding it might chance at any moment to break out into the full blaze of publicity by some untoward revelation which could neither be successfully denied nor plausibly explained away. Hence after a few years he gradually withdrew himself from much active participation in its fortunes.

So well known was this at the time in certain circles that during the latter part of 1735 and the early part of 1736 the rival weekly, the 'Prompter,' constantly twitted the unfortunate Russel with having lost the help of the only person who had been able to relieve by his wit the insufferable dulness which his own personal contributions imparted to the paper. His journal, it was said, was called 'Grub-street' and it was found 'Grub-street.' He was taunted with having been left in the lurch by his master. One peculiarly venomous piece represented the reverend editor as having with tears in his eyes besought the poet to come to his

[1] See a copy of verses on Pope's being present at Fielding's dramatic satire of 'Pasquin,' in 'Grub-street Journal,' No. 328, April 8, 1736; the denial in No. 329 of his having been present; and the information in No. 331 that the denial came from Pope's own mouth.

rescue and write for the paper oftener than once in two months. Unless he were more frequent in his contributions it was intimated that the circulation of the journal would speedily sink as low as was its character. It may be an unwarranted, but it is certainly a plausible inference from the conclusion to the note in the 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' that Pope had expected the editor to deny that the poet was in any way responsible for the articles attacking Budgell, and had not been too well pleased because no action of the sort had been taken. A statement of the real truth would doubtless have shown that he had had nothing to do with these particular pieces; but it would also have tended to destroy the impression that he had anything to do with the paper itself. The latter view the editor may not have been so anxious to spread abroad as was the poet. Possibly for that reason he remained silent.

At all events the attacks upon Russel seemingly became too violent to render the tenure of his position agreeable. It is not unlikely — for it is useless to pretend anything more than probability in the account to be given of many of these transactions — that the words of the poet himself had been too much for his clerical advocate. The man for whose sake he had been made the subject of constant vituperation appeared to disown any connection whatever with the paper which had been set up in his own interest. He appeared to deny that he had ever written a word in it. He appeared to affirm that he had never had the least knowledge of any one concerned in its conduct. He had further stigmatized it as "low." Russel not impossibly may have

felt that he had a grievance and that he had a right to it. At any rate, early in 1736 he announced his intended withdrawal, which soon actually followed, from the management of the paper. He continued, however, to contribute for a while at least to its columns, and edited the selections from its earlier numbers which appeared in 1737. The announcement that he had retired from the field was followed by the statement in the opposing weekly that the post of editor would "be conferred on another reverend militant, who having served a long time under that renowned commander, the experienced Bavius, had acquired as consummate a knowledge as his predecessor."[1] This reverend militant was Miller, another of Pope's partisans, one of whose works in his defence has already been mentioned. Whether he ever actually assumed the position here assigned him or performed any of his duties cannot perhaps be definitely ascertained. With the virtual withdrawal of Pope as a writer for it all interest in the 'Grub-street Journal' had long before ceased fully. No regret was felt by any one, least of all probably by the poet himself, when at the end of the following year it expired.

[1] The Prompter, No. 123, January 13, 1736.

CHAPTER XX

THE ATTACK ON VERBAL CRITICISM

In the general warfare which Pope carried on in the columns of the 'Grub-street Journal' with the men he disliked or detested, Theobald was naturally not neglected. The attacks upon him, however, varied much at different periods. At the outset his importance in the poet's eyes is manifested by the fact that in the early numbers of the paper he is spoken of as the head of the opposing forces. The members of the assumed contending parties were designated as Theobaldians or Popeians. Anything that was to be turned into special ridicule was said to have been written in the Theobaldine manner. In the same manner also pretended corrections were given of pieces criticised. The laureat odes of Cibber, tedious enough in themselves, were made the subject of annotations even more tedious. In them it was professed that the true reading had been restored after the manner of Theobald. It is not altogether easy to believe that this representative position was attained by one eminent only for dulness.

But as Theobald made no reply to these reflections upon himself, the controversy lacked the stimulus that springs from counter-attack. While, therefore, he was far from being forgotten, more virulence was displayed

towards other adversaries of Pope, such as Welsted, Moore-Smythe, and Henley. These returned railing for railing and gave fully as much as they got. The bitterness displayed towards these men in certain of the articles in the 'Grub-street Journal' showed how deeply the assertions and insinuations of his foes had rankled in the poet's sensitive nature. Yet after all, the one person who received the largest share of notice in the paper was a scholar who never paid any attention to what it said, and probably never took the pains to do so much as glance at it. This was Bentley. Him Pope and his followers affected to regard as the type of a scholiast of unwearied industry in studying things not worth studying, of heavy and undigested learning, of constant conjectural emendation of little or no value. The hostility towards him continued the whole life long of the poet. The attack upon the Master of Trinity in the last book of 'The Dunciad,' published less than two years before Pope's death, was more sustained and vehement than any of those indulged in at an earlier period. For some reason, however, the most faithful partisans of Pope have neglected to include Bentley in their list of dunces.

One singular and most discreditable manifestation of this hostility is worth recording here, as showing the character of the poet and the nature of the machinations from which Theobald had to protect his own reputation, if it were protected at all, but which as a matter of fact he did not succeed in protecting. In the latter part of 1734 appeared, without name of author or date of publication, a poem entitled 'Sober Advice

from Horace to the Young Gentlemen about Town, as delivered in his Second Sermon.' It professed to be written in the manner of Mr. Pope, and to him it was dedicated. The English imitation was accompanied with a reprint of the Latin original, as restored, it was said, by the Reverend R. Bentley, Doctor of Divinity. To it were appended annotations purporting to come from the same hand. Some of these notes were grossly indecent. The real author was at once generally suspected, though Pope took some pains to disavow his connection with the work. But he disavowed it in a feeble way. Apparently he took a secret pride in the performance.

Bentley seems to have treated with disdain the shameful attack upon himself in attributing to him the composition of notes which owed their existence to that almost morbid love of obscenity which was a peculiar characteristic of the poet. Not so his son. He at once charged the author with having written these annotations for which his father had been made responsible. He insisted upon a retraction and an apology. To this demand Pope returned for once not an evasive, but a direct denial, and Bentley's son apologized for having brought against the poet an unfounded accusation.[1] The only comment necessary to make upon Pope's course in this matter is that a few years later he included the piece in a volume of his poems published by Dodsley, though without the notes, and without any reference to Bentley.[2] But even in going so

[1] Letter of Pope to Caryll, Feb. 18, 1735, Pope's 'Works,' vol. vi. p. 355.

[2] The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq.: vol. ii., part ii. Containing all

far as this, careful provision was made for disavowing the authorship in case of necessity. The piece was not only put towards the end, but it was preceded by a separate title-page of its own. The pretence of its being an imitation of Pope was kept up, and it was followed by the third satire of Dr. Donne versified by Parnell. There were one or two other features which would help to prevent its being ascribed with absolute assurance to the poet, though he continued to reprint it in subsequent issues of his works. Warburton discarded it from the theoretically authorized and definitive edition which he published in 1751. His example has been followed by later editors with the exception of Warton; though when we observe what they put in, it is not easy to understand why this should be left out.

But though Theobald was not pursued in the 'Grub-street Journal' with the bitterness exhibited towards some, no occasion was passed over to hold him up to ridicule. Sneers contained in epigrams or prose articles were constantly cast at his profession as a lawyer, his ability as a poet and his work as a commentator. Tantalizing reflections were thrown out as to what he had accomplished or had failed to accomplish. He was taunted with having frequently set on foot undertakings which he had not finished. The result had been that the subscribers had been mulcted of all the money paid down. There was here fair ground for attack.

such pieces of this author as were written since the former volumes, and never before published in Octavo. London: Printed for R. Dodsley, 1738. The poem above mentioned extends from page 79 to page 92.

Whether it was his misfortune or his fault, Theobald had rendered himself liable to the charge of soliciting subscriptions for promised works which he had never completed, and according to his enemy had never intended to complete. A peculiarly malicious but likewise entertaining article of this nature appeared in the number of the 'Grub-street Journal' for October 8, 1730. It is of some importance to those interested in the fortunes of Theobald, as showing the projects in which he had then been concerned, though, as might be expected, some of its details were more than untrustworthy, they were distinctly false. The attack, clearly coming from Pope himself, is in the form of a pretendedly official epistle addressed to the worshipful Grubæan society. It is signed by Leonard Welsted as secretary to the body of knights, esquires, and other members of the ancient society of the Bathos, commonly called and known as the 'Gentlemen of The Dunciad.'

In this communication there was an affected pretence of defending Theobald as the president of the latter society from a falsehood which had been inserted in the 'Grub-street Journal.' This was to the effect that he had undertaken a translation of Æschylus with the subscription for Shakespeare in his pocket. The reverse was really the fact. He had undertaken an edition of Shakespeare with the subscription for Æschylus in his pocket. "Full seven years ago," continued the account, "he received guinea subscriptions for the said Æschylus, upon his proposals, dated November, 1723, which asserted the work to be then ready for the press,

and the whole to be delivered the Easter following, viz., April, 1724." The letter then went on to defend the right and privilege exercised by the worthy president of proposing without performing. For this, his constant practice, he was never enough to be extolled. He had proposed an Æschylus in 1723, he had proposed a Shakespeare in 1727, he had proposed an 'Odyssey' in 1717, and two volumes of Wycherley, all of which he had in the most exemplary manner left unperformed. The sting of these remarks lay in the fact that the practice indicated was becoming too common. As the subscriber, on entering his name, paid down half the money due, a constant temptation was presented to the author to content himself with that sum and leave the promised work unfinished. Fraud of this sort was one of the agencies which contributed to break down this method of publication.

Derisive remarks of a similar nature continued to be made or instigated by Pope during the whole period the edition of Shakespeare was in preparation. His partisans were eager to curry favor with their leader by joining in this attack. Of one of the pieces vituperating the poet's enemies which his admirers were in the habit of producing at that time — the 'Harlequin Horace' of the Reverend James Miller — an account has already been given. The passage assailing Theobald began with the following couplet:

> "Theobald in mail compleat of dulness clad,
> Half bard, half puppet-man, half fool, half mad."

An ironical review of this poem, purporting to come from the Grubæan society, appeared a few weeks later

in the 'Grub-street Journal.' Like the previous one just cited, it bears in places clear internal evidence of Pope's handiwork. The comments on the couplet given above were to the effect that these lines contained an injurious and groundless reflection on a very acute and industrious member of the society, "as if he was wont to do anything by halves; when, on the contrary, many dozen of his subscribers are ready to testify that he is very far from having done half of anything he ever undertook; forasmuch as of the many different works for which he has procured their encouragement they have hitherto seen no more than the Proposals and Specimen."[1] As in the previous instance the writer went on to applaud Theobald's behavior, not only for his own sake but for the sake of his subscribers. They had been absolved by this course from the second payment of their contribution money. It was a favor for which every one of them ought to be grateful, as it was far more eligible to pay one guinea rather than two for *nothing*. The double sense in which the word 'nothing' is here employed is exactly in Pope's manner.

Insinuations of this sort waited upon everything Theobald set out to do, and naturally did not contribute to the accomplishment of anything he undertook. There were other articles designed to turn him into ridicule of a kind somewhat different. Among them there was one in particular which contained an amusing fling at the play of 'Double Falsehood' and Theobald's claim that it came from the pen of Shake-

[1] Grub-street Journal, No. 66, April 8, 1731.

speare. This formed a part of a fictitious bill for the more effectual prevention of the importation or sale of compositions in prose or verse, written or pretended to be written by any person convicted of death. Among the provisions was one subjecting to the penalty of forgery any person found guilty of affixing the name of a deceased writer to his own works in order to raise the price of these. To this, however, was appended the following malicious limitation. "Provided," ran its words, "nothing herein contained shall be construed to prejudice L. T. — esq., or the heirs of his body lawfully begotten, in any right or title which he or they may have or pretend to have of affixing the name of William Shakespeare, alias Shakespear, to any book, pamphlet, play or poem, hereafter to be by him or them, or any other person for him or them, written, made or devised."[1]

Theobald not only published no direct reply to these attacks upon himself, there is no evidence that he was concerned in any of the attacks which were directed against Pope. All the retorts of any kind he ever made to charges or insinuations levelled at himself can be found in the newspaper articles of 1728 and 1729 which have already been described. One anonymous publication belonging to this period has indeed been attributed to him. In the middle of December, 1731, appeared Pope's 'Epistle on Taste' addressed to the Earl of Burlington. It excited at the time a great deal of clamor. The general assumption prevailed that in it, under the character of Timon, the Duke of Chandos

[1] Grub-street Journal, No. 97, Nov. 11, 1731.

had been satirized. The charge, whether true or false, caused the poet infinite annoyance. It gave rise in turn to all sorts of attacks. In the number of these was a little volume which came out about the middle of the following month under the title of 'A Miscellany on Taste.' It contained five pieces, not one of which was original. The opening one of the collection was Pope's recently published poem, pirated and annotated. The pirated poem had been printed, it was said, to show Pope's taste in architecture. The volume further contained his then well-known obscene parody of the first psalm. This was to exemplify his taste in divinity. Still another piece was Theobald's letter to the 'Daily Journal' of April 17, 1729, which had been distinctly damaging to Pope's pretensions as an editor. It was inserted here to exemplify "his taste of Shakespeare." The frontispiece to the whole collection was a print by Hogarth representing Pope mounted on a scaffold engaged in bespattering every one who came in his way.

Theobald has occasionally been made responsible for this publication. The collection as a whole is said to have been edited by him.[1] There may be found somewhere ample authority for this assertion; but if so, it has never been made public. On the face of it, any connection on his part with this 'Miscellany' is more than improbable. No intimation to that effect seems to exist in contemporary literature. It was not ascribed to him by the 'Grub-street Journal,' ever on the lookout to seek pretexts for making him an object of attack.

[1] So stated in the catalogue of the library of the British Museum, and from that adopted into other catalogues.

The paper contented itself with designating the work as "Curllean Grubbism."[1] Further, the annotations on the pirated poem are not at all in Theobald's manner. If the statement of his editorship of this work rests on no other foundation than the chance assertion of some unknown scribbler, it may safely be dismissed as not entitled to the slightest credit. The detail of the controversies in which Pope was concerned abounds in these worthless guesses, sometimes upon worthless assertions of the poet himself. For instance, in 1715 Gay's farce of 'What-d-ye-call it' was followed by a key. Twenty years later, Pope, in a note contained in the edition of his correspondence, gave Theobald the credit or discredit of having assisted the player Griffin in the preparation of this attack. Not the slightest evidence was furnished then of the truth of this grossly improbable statement. Yet on the strength of it Theobald appears in all bibliographies as the joint author of this production.

During all the years under consideration Theobald seems in fact to have devoted his time and attention almost exclusively to the preparation of his edition of Shakespeare. The excursions he made into other fields were in all probability undertaken for the sake of securing support for himself and his family, and the further prosecution of his investigations. The only two independent pieces that came from his pen were pretty plainly written with these objects in view. One of them was the so-called dramatic opera of 'Orestes.' This was brought out in April, 1731, at the theater in

[1] No. 108, January 27, 1732.

Lincoln's Inn Fields, and had a respectable though not a remarkable run. It was founded, as its prologue tells us, upon Davenant's play of 'Circe,' though blank verse was substituted for the ryme of its original. It was no better, but it was also no worse than the average play of the period; fully equal indeed to certain which are now occasionally mentioned by some with respect, though never read by any. The only piece he produced purely his own, was a poem of a little over two hundred lines which came out in May, 1732.[1] It was addressed to John Boyle, who had lately succeeded to the title of Earl of Orrery. It was mainly devoted to celebrating the virtues of his father, Charles Boyle, the nominal protagonist in the controversy which the Christ Church wits carried on with Bentley. As such pieces go, it was a distinctly creditable production. Charles Boyle had been one of Theobald's patrons, and in his poem the latter speaks of the great obligations he had been under to the whole family. The son was later to become the friend of Swift and Pope; but he continued to the commentator the favor shown him by his father, and shown even more by his lately deceased wife. To him the edition of Shakespeare was dedicated.

Some slight excursions were also made by Theobald during this period into the pecuniarily unremunerative regions of classical learning. In 1731 Jortin, the ecclesiastical scholar, started a periodical entitled 'Miscellaneous Observations upon Authors, Ancient and Modern.' It was given up to disquisitions purely linguistic and philological. To it Theobald sent at a

[1] Grub-street Journal, May 11, 1732.

somewhat early period in its existence a communication containing some corrections of Eustathius, Athenæus and Suidas. This so impressed the editor that he asked for further contributions. Two more were given, the first containing observations upon Strabo, Anacreon, and Suidas, the second on Æschylus and his scholiast. These are mentioned here solely for the purpose of illustrating the wide range of Theobald's scholarship and the opinion then entertained of its character by those most competent to judge. But an incidental result of his connection with the periodical just mentioned was to lead him to enter a field which up to this time had never been cultivated at all. To one of its numbers he furnished an article in which he gave several emendations of the minor poems of Shakespeare.[1] He was led to undertake the consideration of these by a suggestion of Jortin's. The corrections he made were marked by his usual sagacity and acumen. In nearly every instance they have been generally adopted in modern editions. But it is not for themselves that they are noticeable; it is for the subject treated. This article was the first example of any critical attention paid to the poems as distinguished from the plays. Of the knowledge of the existence of the former many cultivated men of that day were innocent; of actual familiarity with them hardly any one could have been found guilty.

In this matter, as in numerous others, Theobald was a pioneer; but the work he did has been practically ignored and the credit due him has been largely ac-

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 242–250.

corded to others. Still, at the time itself the reputation he had won in his chosen field was of the highest. There was no attempt then made to dispute his superiority as a textual critic. Friend and foe alike acknowledged it. Even the 'Grub-street Journal' conceded that he possessed qualifications for an editor to which no one else could lay claim. It is noticeable that no attempt was ever made to call in question the correctness of his criticism of the specific blunders which Pope had committed. Had his enemies attempted to take that ground, they would have been signally worsted. Pope knew it and his partisans knew it. The only resource therefore was to decry the importance of what could not be answered. In this method of defence the poet as we have seen had early led the way. In the lines he added to the piece, entitled 'Fragment of a Satire,' he set the tune which his partisans were henceforth to sing with increasing volume and emphasis. The practice he called "word-catching" and the labor bestowed upon it "piddling." In a way a sort of credit was given to the commentator. To him belonged industry, even if it were stupid industry. Praise mingled with contempt could be yielded him for his care in setting exactly right points and commas, for the nicety and punctiliousness he displayed in minutiae of this character. It was only in matters of such a kind, however, that his cold and plodding nature exhibited any excellence. He lacked entirely the higher qualities which belong to a really great editor. All the criticism of Theobald as a commentator, which prevailed during the eighteenth century and has been

largely repeated down to our own day; all the estimates which have been taken of his character as a scholar, and of his abilities as a man; these were originated and set in circulation before a single line of his edition of Shakespeare had been printed.

In particular, the efforts of Pope were steadily directed to creating the impression that the labor exhibited by his rival was devoted to matters of little intrinsic importance, and the methods which he pursued, praiseworthy as far as they went, were after all of no special value. The success he met in propagating this belief was due to the mental attitude which largely prevailed then. Since his day the point of view has changed entirely. Conditions which in the eighteenth century favored the policy of Pope would have militated against it now. It was then a widely accepted opinion that it was an unworthy proceeding to devote to minute investigation attention which should be concerned with what were called broad, comprehensive views of humanity. A good deal of contempt was both felt and expressed for those who spent their days in the collection and study of the very things which now occupy the time and thought of the specialist, and spread far and wide his reputation.

This sort of feeling the age was outgrowing, but it was outgrowing it slowly. It had long been dominant. As early as 1676 Shadwell had attacked the whole tribe of collectors in his 'Virtuoso.' As late as 1751 Richard Owen Cambridge brought out a mock-heroic poem, never much read and now utterly unreadable, in which he attempted to ridicule as follies pursuits which

he did not understand. Sneers of this sort had met with wide acceptance, especially from men of letters. Dryden was an exception. His wrath had indeed been aroused by the attack of Shadwell, who professed to be a follower of Ben Jonson. "Where did his wit on learning fix a brand?" exclaimed the indignant poet, referring to the earlier dramatist.[1] But in this matter Pope would have sympathized, not with the satirist, but with the man satirized. In the fourth book of 'The Dunciad' it is the florist, the numismatologist, the collector of butterflies who are assailed. Petty pursuits like these, it is inferentially indicated, should not engage the prolonged attention of reasoning creatures. The proper study of mankind is man. These other matters of comparatively little importance should be left to those who were incapable of rising above them.

Naturally among these subjects of special reprobation verbal criticism was included. This is a pursuit which needs no defenders now. If anything there is a disposition to devote to it too much attention, to pay to it too much deference. But there was very little respect entertained for it then, at least as applied to the elucidation of an English author. The collation of texts in order to ascertain the genuine word or phrase, the setting right of punctuation points whose wrong position perverted the meaning, the research required for the explanation of obscure allusions — all these in the opinion of that time constituted tasks fitted for dull and drudging pedantry. Verbal emendation, even when changing the sense of a passage, or giving to it sense, of which it

[1] MacFlecknoe, line 177.

had apparently been devoid entirely, evinced no real understanding of the author. These were the fruits of dogged industry. They could be secured as easily by a dullard willing to put forth the requisite exertion as by a man of highest genius. In the defence which he made of verbal criticism Theobald was preaching largely to deaf ears. He observed very justly that whenever words were depraved, the sense was necessarily corrupted and falsified. He quoted Longinus to the effect that to make the proper correction of such a passage was "the most consummate fruit of much experience." He added that he who through indolence or inadvertence neglected literal criticism or exhibited contempt for it was sure to lead his readers into error.[1] At such views, accepted universally now, the generation then shrugged its shoulders. The impression widely prevailed that verbal criticism was a sort of work quite unworthy of any one whose fine intellect and cultivated taste rendered him capable of appreciating and setting forth the higher beauties of his author.

Cant of this sort is constantly met with in the years immediately preceding and following the publication of Theobald's edition of Shakespeare. Verbal criticism too, it has to be added, had just at this particular period received a staggering blow in the house of its friends. For a long while Bentley had been coming to be recognized as the greatest scholar that the England of that time knew. The fancied triumph of Boyle was seen by increasingly large numbers to have been a total defeat. But Bentley now succeeded in doing something for his

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i., Preface, p. l.

own reputation which the most pointed satire of the greatest satirist of the age was utterly unable to effect. In January, 1732, was published his famous edition of 'Paradise Lost.' It is, when we take into consideration the poem and the editor, the most extraordinary performance to be found in the whole range of English literature. In preparing it Bentley concocted the apparition of a friend to whom Milton had dictated his epic. To him he had further confided the task of overseeing it as it went through the press. This man had proved unfaithful to the trust reposed in him by the blind poet. Not merely had he substituted words and phrases of his own for those of Milton, but he had foisted lines into the text and even whole passages. Negligence on the part of the printers had co-operated with the audacity and villany of this pretended friend. Through these combined agencies the poem had come to abound in an infinite number of blunders. It could be said indeed that Paradise had been twice lost. It was further evident, it was said, that the proof sheets of the work had never been read to the author. This was true not only of the time in which the first edition was coming out, but during the seven years which preceded the appearance of the second. In this latter not only had the old errors been retained, but even some new ones had been added. Still, it was possible, according to Bentley, to retrieve the poet's own words by sagacity and happy conjecture. This he set out to do.

The suspicion, if not knowledge, of Bentley's intention must have got abroad fully two years at least before the edition itself was brought out. Pretended attempts of

the same nature appeared in the 'Grub-street Journal.'[1] In one of its earliest numbers[2] a correspondent using the signature of Zoilus, and writing or purporting to write from Cambridge, declared that he had been spending his leisure in correcting Milton, who had hitherto appeared under as many faults as any one of the ancient poets. This was all owing to his unhappy blindness. He then proceeded to make a number of emendations which differed little in character from those which Bentley was subsequently to publish. The reasoning too by which he justified his alterations reads astonishingly like that later employed by the great scholar. One indeed gets the impression that some of the emendations which Bentley proposed to make must have somehow come to the knowledge of this ironical contributor. Occasionally the very places which the former subsequently selected for alteration or animadversion fell also under the censure of the latter. In one instance he anticipated the action of the editor by substituting 'sacred' for 'secret' in the opening paragraph of the epic, where mention is made of the "secret top of Oreb or of Sinai."

The friend and amanuensis of Milton whom Bentley evolved from the depths of his own consciousness met with scant mercy at his hands. No real criminal has ever been pelted with more opprobrious terms than this imaginary offender for an imaginary offence. He was styled silly, pedantic, negligent, abominable, absurd, impertinent, affected, puerile, pragmatic, saucy, blundering. These choice epithets applied to the man were

[1] Nos. 9, 12, 25, 87, and 118.

[2] No. 9, March 5, 1730.

rivalled by the phrases descriptive of the work he did. Again and again we are told of his polluting hand, his trash, his trivial and common chat, his strange, shocking expression, his false sense and syntax, his swollen and empty bombast, his contemptible meanness of style, his frequent tautology, his vicious diction, his foul neglect, his miserable jejunity. The limbo of fools, it was asserted, was the fittest habitation for this interpolator. He appeared to be an injudicious smatterer in astronomy, geography, poetical story, and old romances. These are mere samples of the abuse which Bentley heaped really upon Milton, but professedly upon the supposed betrayer of the trust reposed in him by the unsuspecting poet. There is no need of furnishing references to particular places where these epithets and descriptions occur. Either they themselves or their equivalents can be found on every page.

One thing Bentley spared us. The text appeared in his edition just as Milton wrote it. The objectionable words, phrases, and passages which were declared to have been foisted in by the supposed editor were indicated by italicized words and lines, or were enclosed in brackets; but they held their proper place in the poem. It was to the side or to the bottom of the page that the emendations were consigned. Along with the changes recommended was a commentary proving what it was in each case that the author had doubtless written. The proposed alterations, had they been received into the text, would have had the effect of converting the finest poetry into something more prosaic than is permissible to even the prosiest prose. The atrocity of

these assaults upon the diction can be appreciated only by him who makes a study of the whole work; but a general idea of their nature can be gained from the consideration of a very few specimens. Bentley in his preface gave a list of about fifty alterations which he singled out for special commendation from the many hundreds he had made. These, he said, proved beyond question that the poem was "polluted with such monstrous faults as are beyond example in any other printed book."

Of these fifty a tithe will suffice to show what no one would be willing to believe did not the printed page exist. Satan, after recovering from the stupor of his fall into the burning lake, is represented by Milton as saying to his companion that "the Almighty hath not built here for his envy."[1] Bentley would read "the Almighty hath no butt here for his envy." When Gabriel, according to Milton, asks Satan why he has "broke the bounds prescribed to thy transgressions,"[2] Bentley easily retrieved, as he said, the true reading by substituting 'transcursions' for 'transgressions.' When Milton tells us that the fallen angels concocted and adusted sulphurous and nitrous foam with "subtle art,"[3] Bentley corrected a particular one of what he designated as a whole row of blunders by reading 'sooty chark' for 'subtle art.' When Milton recalls that past forever gone when God or angel guest visited and talked familiarly with man, "permitting him the while venial discourse unblamed," Bentley preferred 'mensal' to 'venial,' as lessening the familiarity and

[1] Book 1, l. 259. [2] Book 4, l. 879. [3] Book 6, l. 513.

condescension.[1] When Satan in the guise of the serpent is represented as having first caught sight of "the heavenly form angelic" of Eve, the word 'angelic' struck Bentley as quite inappropriate under the circumstances; so he applied to her form the term 'Adamic.'[2] Such alterations speak for themselves. Further the ridiculousness of the changes proposed was equalled by the ridiculousness of the reasons given for the changes. It is, moreover, a striking proof of the low state in which English scholarship then was that Bentley's ignorance of his own language is sometimes as astounding as his utter insensibility to poetic beauty.

Such a work, coming from the man it did, naturally produced for a while a good deal of a sensation. Reviews of it sprang up at once, remarks upon it came out in serials, so-called friendly letters were addressed to its editor. Among the various satirical pieces which swarmed from the press was a pamphlet, proving that Milton had dictated his 'Paradise Lost' in ryme, but his ill-judging amanuensis, having no taste that way, had jumbled it into blank verse. Upon the pachydermatous hide of the Master of Trinity, then in the midst of his second ten years of intestinal war, these paper bullets made as little impression as they would have done upon a stone wall. But there is no question that he had given in this instance ample justification for the gibes and scoffs with which the work was greeted. Furthermore if his personality was not affected by the contempt poured upon his performance, it was not so with the subject he had undertaken to illustrate. The

[1] Book 9, l. 5. [2] Ibid. l. 458.

tasteless alterations, conjoined with the absurd arguments by which they were supported, were enough of themselves to bring into positive disrepute all attempts to correct the text of English classics. Did we not know indeed that the edition of Milton was undertaken seriously, it would be no unnatural assumption that it was an elaborate device to cast ridicule upon the methods of verbal criticism. That assuredly was its effect at the time. If such were its results when employed by him who was the greatest scholar of the age, it would be natural to ask, what would they be when they were the productions of inferior men?

There is no question that this most ridiculous edition of Milton proved a distinct stumbling-block in the way of Theobald's edition of Shakespeare. From that time on his name was almost invariably joined with Bentley's whenever any comment was made upon verbal criticism. The humbler scholar could not free his own labors entirely from the discredit cast upon the subject by the extraordinary performance of the greater. So much indeed did it work to his injury that he felt it necessary in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare to call attention to the fact that Bentley's design was unlike his own; and as they were aiming at different ends, they consequently followed different methods. But he was never able to rescue the work he did wholly from the opprobrium which the great chieftain of scholarship had brought upon practices which all scholars employ. There was undoubtedly a certain consolation in having his own name coupled with the great name of Bentley and involved in a like condem-

nation. But the latter was supported by the authority which belongs to established position. He possessed the friendship of men holding high places in church and state. More than that, he had with him the influence wielded by a large body of students who were capable of appreciating classical scholarship, and who were not in the least affected by the depreciatory estimate expressed by a poet who had genius indeed, but who was well known not to have learning. But none of these advantages accrued to Theobald. The circle who could appreciate his work, though steadily increasing in size, was after all limited in number. It was largely made up also of scholars comparatively obscure, and so far as the great reading public was concerned, possessed of but little influence. On the other hand, his great adversary was supposed by the general public to be an authority upon English speech because he was the greatest English author of the age. Hence the shafts which rebounded from Bentley without inflicting harm struck deep into Theobald's reputation even at the time.

One of the most virulent of the special attacks made upon him was in a poetical Epistle addressed to Pope on 'Verbal Criticism.' It appeared anonymously, but was well known to be the work of David Mallet. It came out in April, 1733.[1] Its full title was "Of Verbal Criticism, Occasioned by Theobald's Shakespear and Bentley's Milton." To it was prefixed an advertise-

[1] "Next Monday will be published An Epistle to Mr. Pope, occasioned by Bentley's Milton and Theobald's Shakespear. Printed for L. Gilliver." (Daily Journal, Friday, April 3, 1733.) For advertisement of actual publication see 'Grub-street Journal,' April 26, 1733.

ment which is now much more interesting than the poem itself. In it the author informed the public that it was the design of his epistle to expose the abuse of verbal criticism. He could not, therefore, without manifest partiality overlook the Editor of Milton and the Restorer of Shakespeare. He had read over, he tells us, the many and ample specimens with which this latter scholiast had already obliged the public. Of these and of these only did he pretend to give his opinion. But whatever he might think of the critic, he had not the least ill-will to the man. Accordingly, though these verses had been written several months before, he had, as he gave the world to understand, magnanimously deferred printing them until he had learned that the subscription for Theobald's new edition of Shakespeare was closed. This last statement conveyed information which had reached him alone.

It is possible that the author of this poem may not have fully deserved the contempt which Dr. Johnson felt and expressed for him. The great moralist declared with his usual vigor that there was no dirty work Mallet was not ready to do for hire; and it is a suggestive fact that while Englishmen used him, few persons have ever been found to say a good word for him save Scotchmen. But whether his reputation be justly or unjustly assailed, he was certainly engaged during his career in a number of transactions which on their outside have a distinctly suspicious look. But of all the doubtful or shady performances in which he was concerned, none exceeded in impudence the composition

of this poem. Never was there furnished a more striking illustration of the shamelessness, and with it the complacency, of pretentious and insolent sciolism. To a general ignorance of scholarship of any sort Mallet added special ignorance of English scholarship. In this particular he was in a class much below Pope, who really appreciated what he felt it his interest to disparage. But Mallet knew so little of the subject he talked about that he was incapable of even getting a conception of his own lack of comprehension. Nothing can be conceived much more ridiculous than this puny literary Gigadibs presuming to match himself with a scholar of the stature of Bentley; for it is observable that neither Pope nor his followers confined themselves to attacks upon the great critic for his edition of Milton, but directed them against all his work upon the classics.

In this poem Bentley was spoken of as "out-tibbalding poor Tibbald." The condescending tone employed towards the editor of Shakespeare was as much out of place as the reference to the great classical scholar. The superiority of the former in the matters for which he was attacked dwarfed his critic as much as did that of the latter. Mallet, to be sure, was never disturbed by any suspicion of the sort; for there are certain distinct advantages connected with being a complete ignoramus. His poem, however, serves to give us a fair conception of the manner and spirit with which the warfare was carried on against the commentator. A few extracts which follow will serve to reveal the nature of the attack:

"See, in the darkness of dull authors bred,
With all their refuse lumber'd in his head,
Long years consum'd, large volumes daily turn'd,
And Servius read perhaps, while Maro burn'd,
In error obstinate, in wrangling loud,
Unbred, unsocial, positive and proud;
Forth steps at last the self-applauding wight,
Of points and letters, chaff and straw to write.

. . . . . .

"Hence much hard study without sense or breeding,
And all the grave impertinence of reading.
If Shakespear says, the noon-day sun is bright,
His scholiast will remark, it then was light;
Turn Caxton, Winkin, each old Goth and Hun,
To rectify the reading of a pun.
Thus nicely trifling, accurately dull,
How one may toil and toil — to be a fool.

"But is there then no honor due to age?
No reverence to great Shakespear's noble page?
And he who half a life has read him o'er,
His mangled points and commas to restore,
Meets he such slight regard in nameless lays,
Whom Bufo treats, and Lady Wou'd-be pays?

. . . . . .

Blest genius! who bestows his oil and pains
On each dull passage each dull book contains;
The toil more grateful, as the task more low;
So carrion is the quarry of a crow.
Where his fam'd author's page is flat and poor,
There most exact the reading to restore;
By dint of plodding and by sweat of face,
A bull to change, a blunder to replace:
Whate'er is refuse, critically gleaning,
And mending nonsense into doubtful meaning.

. . . . . .

> For this the scholiast claims his share of fame,
> And modest, prints his own with Shakespear's name.

Had Mallet consciously and conscientiously set out to proclaim his utter inability to appreciate what was the duty of an editor of Shakespeare he could not have done it more effectually than he did in this poem. It proved that he had never been guilty, to use his own words, "of the grave impertinence of reading"; of doing anything to throw light on points that were obscure; or of knowing how to set about doing it. Pope, who had taken care not to mar his work by too much low industry of the sort here denounced, naturally came in for a good deal of encomium. Of him the Epistle spoke in terms of highest eulogy. It was Pope who had shown how false and vain were the arts of the scholiast, who, apparently by the fact of being a scholiast, had no pretence to taste or genius, and who, if he possessed learning, lacked common-sense. Furthermore the advertisement prefixed to the Epistle declared that it had been "undertaken and written entirely without the knowledge of the gentleman to whom it is addressed." It was simply designed as a public testimony of the author's inviolable esteem for that poet.

Whenever professions of this sort went on between Pope and his retainers, it is usually safe to infer that they were intended to impose upon the public. This is no exception to the general rule. The wording would be sure to give the reader the impression that the poet had no knowledge of the work till he had seen it in print. But this interpretation, though a natural, was

by no means a necessary one. As a matter of fact we know that some months before it was published, it was read and commented upon by the person to whom it was addressed. "Bentley will be angry at you," wrote Pope to the painter Richardson in November, 1732, "and at me too, shortly, for what I could not help; a satirical poem on 'Verbal Criticism' by Mr. Mallet, which he inscribed to me before I knew anything of it."[1] The poet was grateful both for the praise of himself and for the censure of his adversaries. He wrote to the author a few days after the letter just mentioned that he had read the Epistle over and over with great and just delight. He had shown it to Bolingbroke, who desired in consequence to make Mallet's acquaintance. He himself was so pleased with it that he was unwilling to part with it till it was absolutely required.[2]

If we can trust the report of an enemy, Pope's action in this matter was something more than passive. He procured the publication of the poem by the man who generally brought out his own pieces. Further, if the account be true, he required Gilliver to pay for it. The story is told by Thomas Cooke. Extracts from his commonplace-book were printed late in the century, and under the year 1744 appeared the following passage

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. ix. p. 498.

[2] Ibid. Elwyn and Courthope's edition, vol. x. p. 86. The letter as there given is dated Nov. 7, and has 1733 added in brackets as the date of the year. It should be 1732, for the poem, as we have seen, was published in April, 1733. The further statement in the note that it was published March, 1734, is consequently incorrect. It was readvertised and reissued in February of that year.

relating to the poem. "Mr. Lawton Gilliver," wrote Cooke, "the bookseller who published the first edition, which was in folio, told me that Mr. Pope came to him and said, "You must give Mallet twenty guineas for his essay on 'Verbal Criticism,' and that on Mr. Pope's peremptory recommendation he did give Mallet twenty guineas for it and did not sell one hundred." [1] Statements like these, coming from an avowed enemy, are to be received with a good deal of caution. But there is assuredly nothing intrinsically improbable in the account. Indeed there is a probability of the truth of all of it as there is certainty of the truth of part of it. The work excited not the slightest interest at the time of its original appearance. Bentley probably never looked at it, if he even heard of it. Pope's fancy that he would be angry at some things, for which contempt would have been too mild a word to express his feelings, was based upon the error of judging the state of mind of the great scholar by his own sensitiveness to criticism.

The later history of the author of this poem has an interest of its own in connection with this eulogium upon Pope. Expressions of regard continued to be interchanged between the two men during the years which followed. It is not unlikely that on the part of the greater one they were perfectly sincere. It may be deemed a piece of poetic justice — it is certainly a comment upon the inviolable esteem Mallet professed for the person to whom the Epistle was addressed — that Bolingbroke, to whom in consequence of it he had

[1] Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxi., part ii. p. 1181.

been introduced, should employ him as the person to father his own attack upon Pope himself, in the advertisement prefixed to the genuine edition of the 'Patriot King'; and that in turn the hired agent should be stigmatized, in one of the defences of the poet which this preface called forth, as "a fellow who while Mr. Pope lived, was as diligent in licking his feet as he is now in licking Lord Bolingbroke's."[1]

[1] Gentleman's Magazine, vol. xix. p. 196, 1749.

CHAPTER XXI

THEOBALD'S EDITION AND ITS RECEPTION

NEVER did any edition of Shakespeare encounter greater difficulties in the course of its preparation than did Theobald's; never was one carried through to completion against more formidable odds. A systematic campaign of depreciation and misrepresentation was conducted both against the man and the work from the time the project was made public. There was no form of attack, from petty insinuation to open vituperation, to which resort was not made. Long before a line of it was printed, it was stigmatized as a piece of heavy drudgery, the work of a plodder without wit or taste or sense. The editor was censured for his presumption in engaging in such a task. One would fancy from many of the comments made that the undertaking was of the nature of an assault upon the reputation of the author it pretended to illustrate. He who takes the pains to examine the ephemeral publications of that day will gain from some of them the impression that the work Theobald contemplated was a crime against literature, if not indeed against morals.

Shakespearean controversy can certainly show nowhere else in its history attempts so arduous and persistent to destroy the reputation of a work before its

appearance. The attacks which have been already cited will give a conception, but after all an imperfect conception, of their number and virulence as a whole. A most singular collection would be formed, were one to rake from files of forgotten newspapers or from forgotten publications of various sorts the articles, paragraphs, letters, epigrams, and poems which were put in circulation in order to destroy confidence in the work before a single page of it had been seen by a single one of its detractors. There was this one justification for the course pursued, that the men who gave expression to these utterances were as competent to form a judgment of the way it had been done before they had examined a line of it as they would have been after examining the whole of it.

Theobald, though he maintained silence, could not have failed to be keenly sensitive to these attacks. He referred to them in the preface to the work when completed. In that he spoke with a good deal of feeling of the "hundred mean and dishonest artifices" which had been employed "to discredit the edition and cry down the editor" during the period he had been engaged in its preparation.[1] This was far from being an overstatement. Something of the spirit which pervaded these utterances can be gathered from the elaborate attack of Mallet already described. The lighter assaults can be represented by a single epigram, which in all probability came from the pen of Pope himself. It was certainly printed in a volume which was brought out under his supervision. It was headed "On a Lady who

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i., Preface, p. xlix.

subscribed forty Pounds to Tibbald's Shakespear," and read as follows: —

> "An Empress once gave Virgil many a pound;
> For what? for writing things that made her swoond:
> The same why shou'd not then Sempronia do,
> To Tib. for writing things that make one Sp—." [1]

In spite of all the difficulties and discouragements in his path Theobald carried through his work to a successful completion. He had a right to felicitate himself upon the fact. It was mainly due to the high reputation he had acquired among all those competent to judge by what Pope had called some "single remark or poor conjecture on some word or pointing of Shakespear." No better proof can, perhaps, be adduced of the confidence which had come to be felt in him than the list of subscribers he was enabled to secure. The mere statistics are, what statistics usually are not, exceedingly informing. To Theobald's edition there were four hundred and twenty-eight subscribers, who took nearly five hundred copies, as against four hundred and eleven to the edition of his predecessor, who took about four hundred and fifty copies. In a way the comparison is unfair. The lower price was distinctly in favor of the later work. But against this is to be set the overwhelming reputation of Pope as the greatest man of letters of the age, as contrasted with any pretensions possessed by an obscure scholar whose only recommendation was that he knew his subject.

Even had the numbers been the same, there was no

[1] Epigram VIII. in 'Collection of Pieces occasioned by the Dunciad,' 1732.

questioning the superiority in character of the names on Theobald's list. We need not lay too much stress upon the favor shown the work by members of the highest nobility. Of these there were many among the subscribers, beginning with the Prince and the Princess of Wales. Still, in this respect his edition did not surpass Pope's. Far more striking to us is the number of names of those eminent in the world of art and science and letters. Among them can be found the great scholar Bentley, the antiquary Martin Folkes, the physicians Richard Mead and Hans Sloane, the coming novelists Richardson and Fielding, the painter Hogarth, the poet Young, the actors Booth, Quin, and the Cibbers, father and son, and the greatest of living Englishwomen of letters, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Not to be passed over is the future commentator John Upton, nor the future editor Warburton. These names and those of several others that could be mentioned could never have been secured for the work of a man who was generally reputed dull.

By Theobald himself this subscription must have been looked upon as a great personal triumph. He had been held up to scorn as the dunce of dunces in the most brilliant satire in the language. Hostility had not ceased with its production. He had been pursued during the years which followed its appearance with every species of attack that malice could inspire or wit envenom. Yet unknown to the multitude, unfriended by but few of the powerful, having against him the active and unscrupulous enmity of the greatest genius of the age, he had overcome all

obstacles by the sheer force of the confidence the public had come to feel in what he would do, from its knowledge of what he had done. The men who knew something about Shakespeare had demanded the work. They were not to be overawed by the clamor of the men who knew little or nothing about him, or about what it was necessary to do in order to establish the text. The wishes of this portion of the educated community had to be considered. We may be sure that it was no abstract love of justice that led Tonson to take part with others in the publication of a new edition which, if successful, would put an end to the hope of any further profit from the one of which he was the exclusive proprietor.

Undoubtedly this persistent depreciation of the work produced no small effect at the time. It may be that more even to that than to the labor involved was due the delay in its publication. We know that full two years before it appeared Theobald was engaged in the preparation of its preface.[1] The frequent attacks upon him and it must have distinctly hindered the securing of subscriptions upon which its success depended, and may have even rendered the actual bringing it out problematical. The day of its completion kept constantly receding. Announcements were made from time to time of the speedy appearance of something which failed to appear. Naturally his enemies took occasion to suggest that he was extorting money from his subscribers without designing to give them anything in return.[2] As the date of its actual publication approached, the journals of

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. pp. 621, 626.

[2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i., Preface, p. lxiv.

the day reveal the progress he was making. "We hear," says a news item of January, 1733, "such despatch is made in printing Mr. Theobald's edition of Shakespear, and the same is in so much forwardness, that it may be expected that the whole will be ready for the subscribers in a very short time."[1] In the following April an advertisement announced that the whole work was almost printed off, that complete volumes were to be seen at the editor's home, and that the subscription would be closed at the latter end of the month.[2]

Mallet, according to his own account, generously waited for the conclusion of the subscription before he brought out his poetical essay on 'Verbal Criticism' in which he assailed with equal ignorance and virulence Theobald and Bentley. He labored indeed under the peculiar moral incapability which beset Pope and his partisans of telling the exact truth whenever anything could be gained by making the statement inexact. The subscription was not to close till the end of April, even if there occurred then no extension of the time. Mallet's attack upon the editor appeared in the middle of the same month. It pretty clearly fell flat from the press, and the amiable designs of its deviser and encourager were in consequence of no avail. The subscription was at last satisfactorily completed. Yet publication did not follow speedily after the books seem to have been closed. It was not till the early part of the next year that the edition made its appearance. An advertisement in the daily papers of January, 1734, announced that on the 24th of the month the work

[1] Daily Journal, January 13, 1733. [2] Ibid. April 5, 1733.

would be published.[1] Notice was given that the books in quires would then be delivered to subscribers at the house of the editor in Wyan's Court, Great Russell Street, where he would be in attendance all day long for the purpose, and where the few copies, as yet unsubscribed for, could be secured. Accordingly on the 24th of January, 1734, the copies were ready for issuing; but as they bear the date of 1733 the edition is usually spoken of as belonging to that year.

The success of the work was immediate and pronounced. Contemporary records show the favorable estimate which was everywhere taken of it. Its superiority to any edition which had preceded it was so manifest that in a short time it was perceived that any attempts to depreciate it were sure to recoil upon the heads of those who put them forth. 'The Grub-street Journal,' true to the object of its creation, was disposed at first to assail the work in the way which had now become habitual with the followers of Pope. About two months after its delivery to subscribers an attack was made upon it in that paper by an anonymous contributor. He was good enough to say that he did not depreciate literal criticism, but he would not have those

[1] "On Thursday next (the 24th instant) will be published by subscription Shakespeare's Plays in 7 volumes in octavo. With notes explanatory and critical. By Mr. Theobald.

"N. B. The books in quires will be delivered to the subscribers at the editor's house in Wyan's Court in Great Russell St., Blomesbury; where attendance will be given all day long for that purpose, and where the few copies, yet unsubscribed, are to be had." (Daily Journal, Friday, January 18, 1734.) On January 24 an advertisement in the same paper announced the work as that day published. This advertisement was frequently repeated.

"whose talents are confined to literals, arrogate to themselves the name of critic." That term, he was careful to inform us, was derived from a Greek word signifying 'judge.' What sort of a judge would he be, he went on triumphantly to ask, who "instead of considering the merits of the whole cause, should entirely busy himself in examining the phrases and carping at the language of those that were before him?" Such men might be entitled to the designations of literal commentator, scholiast, nomenclaturist, or any less name that could be invented; but that of critic or judge was above them. It is, he added, the fate of the greatest and brightest geniuses to be commented on, and to comment upon them is the task of the heaviest and the most narrow of pedants.

This was the general attitude of the writer of the article. The attack he now proceeded to make specific. Fellows like these he had been describing confer upon every arbitrary alteration they make the name of an emendation. In fact, they had arrived, he tells us, at such a degree of insolence that like footmen got into their masters' coaches, it was no longer Bentley at the tail of Horace, or Theobald at the tail of Shakespear; but as if the work of these authors had become their own, they go by the name of Bentley's Horace and Theobald's Shakespear. The last of these performances had just been received by the irate correspondent of the paper. "It is," he said, "such a master-piece of trifling and vanity as would make an excellent subject for the public diversion were some I could name disposed to give it. Our great editor and critic is perpetually tri-

umphing like Caligula for having picked up cockle-shells and periwinkles." [1]

Pope may or may not have had anything directly to do with this communication, accurately as it depicted his sentiments and clearly as he was pointed out as the one who could divert the public, were he so disposed, with this so-called "master-piece of trifling and vanity." But before the article appeared he had taken pains to do all that lay in his power to bring the work of his rival editor into disrepute. Shortly after its appearance, Mallet's poetical essay on 'Verbal Criticism' was once more advertised for sale and brought again to the attention of the public. In the part of his preface in which Theobald had dealt with the attempts to depreciate his as yet unpublished edition by depreciating verbal criticism itself, he had made a contemptuous reference to the piece. "To this end," he wrote, "and to pay a servile compliment to Mr. Pope, an anonymous writer has, like a Scotch pedlar in wit, unbraced his pack on the subject. But that his virulence might not seem to be levelled singly at me, he has done me the honor to join Dr. Bentley in the libel. I was in hopes we should have been both abused with smartness of satire at least, though not with solidity of argument; that it might have been worth some reply in defence of the science attacked. But I may fairly say of this author as Falstaff does of Poins; — 'Hang him, baboon! his wit is as thick as Tewkesbury mustard; there is no more conceit in him than is in a mallet.'" [2]

[1] Grub-street Journal, No. 220, March 14, 1734.
[2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i., Preface, p. lii.

The point of this sarcastic reference cannot be called very keen, and the pun for which Shakespeare's words gave the occasion was not of a high type of this lowest order of wit. But poor as it was, it stirred up Pope and seems even to have penetrated Mallet's thick cuticle. Neither of them appeared ostensibly in reply; but in the reissue of the poem the publisher was obliged to come forward in its defence against this attack. He accompanied the advertisement of it with some remarks which purport to proceed from himself, but which, it is hardly necessary to observe, were never of his composition. They were avowedly suggested by the extract just quoted from Theobald's preface. It was common, Gilliver was made to say, for booksellers to recommend the pieces they publish, whether the compliment be paid by the author to himself or by one of his friends. It was something altogether new for them to mention what was said in dispraise. This however he purposed to do. "I will own ingeniously to the town," he continued, "that Mr. Lewis Theobald (*a literal critic* I think he calls himself) has seriously declared in the preface to *his* Shakespear, he can see, for his part, no manner of conceit, wit or joke whatever in the poem I here advertise."[1]

The task imposed upon the unfortunate publisher was not limited to this advertisement. In the following week he returned to the subject in a communication which appeared in the 'Grub-street Journal' under his own signature.[2] It was manifestly written by Pope, with

[1] Grub-street Journal, No. 218, Feb. 28, 1734.
[2] Ibid. No. 219, March 7, 1734.

the possible assistance of Mallet, though the wit displayed in it did not require a conjunction of the abilities of the two. It is indeed a fair specimen of the dreary sarcasm with which Theobald's emendations of Shakespeare were attacked in the wisely discarded notes to the early editions of 'The Dunciad.' Gilliver professed in his letter that it was not the province of one who was only a seller of books to invade the high province of one who says that he is a restorer of them. The 'Epistle on Verbal Criticism,' it was asserted, had put Theobald so grievously out of temper that he had affirmed that the author of the poem was a baboon, a pedlar, and that his wit was as thick as Tewkesbury mustard. But this comparison, though taken from Shakespeare, was unfortunate. Mustard was famous for biting sharply and for taking people by the nose. These were qualities which the editor would naturally be unwilling to concede either to the piece or its writer. Out of pure friendship the publisher would therefore help him out by roundly asserting that it was a spurious reading in all the editions, and could easily be rectified by an obvious correction which was just as well grounded as any three in five hundred of his own. All that was needed was to change *m* into *c*, "and you have the passage in its original purity, exactly as Mr. Theobald will wish he had read it." The harmless custard will then take the place of the poignant mustard. To confirm this alteration the index to Peter Langtoft's 'Chronicle' had been consulted. There it was found that Tewkesbury was then famous for custard. Gilliver undoubtedly reaped money and repute in his occupation

as a consequence of being Pope's publisher; but he had to pay a heavy price for it in being compelled to father labored trash of this sort.

But the favor with which the work was generally received came speedily to overawe the 'Grub-Street Journal' itself. Even those who sought to discredit the edition did not venture to attack in it what was the only legitimate subject of attack. Any fault found in details was directed not to Theobald's emendations of Shakespeare but to those of Greek authors. In his defence of literal criticism he had unfortunately inserted several of these into his preface — unfortunately, not because they were doubtless wrong, but because they were both uncalled-for and dreadfully out of place. It was these and these only that any one of his assailants then ventured to criticise. The truth is that the reputation of Theobald as the best Shakespeare scholar of his time was now so generally recognized that no one cared to come in conflict with him on specific points. Even the 'Grub-street Journal' was compelled to bow to the verdict of the public. It growled, but it did not venture to bite. It admitted, in fact, a letter from a correspondent who criticised Theobald on certain points but who at the same time paid him marked deference. "The late edition of Shakespeare," he said, "is such an one as I think will give the highest pleasure to all lovers of that poet; and at the same time must forever silence all the little wits who abuse literal criticism." What he objected to was the unnecessary introduction of emendations from the Greek which were contained in the preface. Some of these he controverted; but

in controverting them he was polite and respectful. "Mr. T.," he said in conclusion, "had not the least occasion to call in assistance from Greece in order to maintain the title he so incontestably possesses of the best English critic." [1]

The high praise which was accorded in this article was made even more significant by the grudging comments which accompanied it from the editor of the journal. The impression produced by Theobald upon the public had clearly cowed a writer who for years had opened the columns of his paper to derisive remarks upon the man and his undertaking. Anxious to censure, he feared to contradict his contributor, whoever he was. He did not venture, he said, to affirm that the emendations of Shakespeare were wrong; they were only to be suspected. Theobald himself, after the systematic campaign of misrepresentation and abuse which had been carried on against him in this particular sheet was naturally distrustful of compliments coming from that quarter. Still, as there seemed to be no reason, and pretty surely there was none, to question the sincerity of the writer of the article just mentioned, he sent a reply. "Though I had little thought," he wrote, "of becoming a correspondent to your journal, yet when I am attacked with decency, I look upon it as much a justice to the world to retract any error I commit, as it is a justice to myself to defend [2] against an ungrounded accusation. Whenever idle scurrilities are thrown at me, I shall take the liberty of passing them over in silence; but as your paper is the vehicle for all reflec-

[1] Grub-street Journal, No. 229, May 16, 1734. [2] *Sic.*

tions levelled at me, I must expect from your professed impartiality, it will be equally vacant to my justification of myself."[1] Theobald then went on to consider in this and a later number[2] the criticisms made upon his emendations of Greek texts. They do not concern us here; but no one reading them can fail to be struck by the scholarly spirit with which they are animated. The hostile editor, indeed, in his comments upon the first article could not but admit that its writer was plainly contending for truth more than victory.

One of the earliest to congratulate Theobald upon the success of his work was the man who was later to attain special prominence as the calumniator of his dead friend and the impudent appropriator of his merits. "I rejoice heartily," wrote Warburton the following May, "in your good fortunes and am glad to find the town in a disposition to do you justice."[3] About a month after, he sent him a bundle of comments and corrections which contained, he said, all that he could find to cavil at in the edition. "I have been so exact," he wrote, "in my inquisitorial search after faults that I dare undertake to defend every note throughout the whole bulky work save these thirteen I have objected to."[4] A little earlier he had also forwarded fifty emendations and remarks which he had transcribed from those previously sent, but which Theobald had failed to use. These he regarded as being better than any of those published. He desired to have them included in the volume con-

[1] Grub-street Journal, No. 232, June 6, 1734.
[2] Ibid. No. 234, June 20, 1734.
[3] Letter of May 17, 1734, Nichols, vol. ii. p. 634.
[4] Letter of June 20, 1734, ibid. p. 645.

taining the minor poems, which was then expected to appear speedily.[1] Most of them have since been printed. There are among them a few comments which are worth consideration, especially some acute remarks upon the observation of the unities in 'The Tempest.' But generally speaking, there would have been little loss to learning or literature if the great majority of them had been suffered to remain in the state of manuscript. Warburton naturally took an entirely different view of their value. In the preface to his own edition he represented Theobald as having sequestered them for the benefit of some future edition of his own. Yet he could not but have been well aware that an opportunity of the sort had already been furnished and had not been improved.

Any previous neglect on Theobald's part to reply to the persistent attacks which Pope had been making upon him directly or indirectly was fully made up in the notes to this edition. Not that there were any reflections upon the poet as a man. There is but one instance in which anything can be tortured into the shape of a personal allusion of this sort. Even then it is couched in the form of a general statement, the particular application of which is a matter of inference and not of assertion.[2] But if the man was spared, there was no restraint exhibited in speaking of the editor. Theobald's exposure of Pope's shortcomings was thoroughgoing. There was not a play in which illustrations were not furnished of his carelessness, his blunders, and his

[1] Letters of May 17 and June 2, 1734, ibid. pp. 634, 635.

[2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iv. p. 419.

ignorance. He pointed out places where words or phrases or lines essential to the meaning had been dropped from the text, either by accident or incomprehensible intention. He pointed out unauthorized changes which had been made because the editor did not understand what the character was trying to say. He pointed out passages where the punctuation employed had had the effect of forcing upon the sentence an inferior or utterly erroneous interpretation.

Even when Pope had followed the text of some one of the early authorities, it was no difficult matter for Theobald to show how lamentable had been his failure. According to him an unhappy fatality hung over his predecessor, wherever there was a various reading, of espousing the wrong one. It must be admitted that words and passages found at times in the poet's text furnish a singular commentary upon that superiority of taste for which it subsequently became the fashion to give him credit. One instance must suffice. In one of his soliloquies Hamlet contrasts his failure to do anything with his readiness to unpack his heart with words. In the folio text he speaks of himself as falling "a-cursing, like a very drab, A scullion." For this last word the quartos, excepting the first, had, strangely enough, 'stallion.' This, Pope adopted in his edition. The choice was a singular one. The ability of a stallion to curse is a phenomenon in nature which has escaped the attention of even those to whom the horse is the central figure of creation about which men revolve as mere accessories. Theobald's alteration of *scullion* into *cullion* was as bad as it was unnecessary; but

there is nothing about it of the hopeless absurdity of *stallion*.

Much more often, however, did the critic have occasion to call attention to Pope's wanton neglect of the early authorities, his blind following of the text of Rowe when a far superior reading would have been furnished had he consulted the original editions which he pretended to have collated. Furthermore the declaration put forth by the poet in his preface that no innovations had been made save *ex fide codicum* gave occasion for comment which was sedulously improved. Reading after reading was pointed out which was purely of Pope's own manufacture. It had been manufactured too either because he had not consulted the original text or had not understood it. In truth, "the late learned editor," as Theobald sarcastically designated his predecessor,[1] was, according to him, equally unhappy in his indolence and in his industry. Each led him into error. His sophistications of the text were made with as little reason as authority. The general tenor of Theobald's comments can be gathered from part of a note upon one passage. In 'Richard II.' the queen, mournfully contemplating the revolution which is impending, is represented, at the approach of the gardeners, as wagering, though that particular word, while understood, is not expressed,

> "My wretchedness unto a row of pins,
> They 'll talk of state." [2]

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. ii. p. 19; vol. iii. p. 317.
[2] Act iii., scene 4.

For the first line as found in the original editions Pope gave the following extraordinary reading:

"My wretchedness suits with a row of pines." [1]

"This is merely, I presume," commented Theobald, "*ex cathedra Popiana*, for I can find no authority for it any more than any sense in it." [2]

At the same time it is fair to free Theobald from the charge of following up and dwelling upon every petty oversight and mistake committed by his predecessor. This was an assertion then not unfrequently made and has since been sometimes repeated. Theobald himself gave a much nearer idea of the truth in the comment he published upon a line left imperfect by Rowe, and as a result, so left by Pope. This he filled out from the original edition. "I have restored," he added, "an infinite number of such passages *tacitly* from the first impression." [3] The employment of 'infinite' here is the loosest of loose usage; but there was certainly a large number of corrections made in Theobald's text on the authority of the early copies, but made silently. Furthermore, he not unfrequently passed by, without comment, instances of scandalous neglect on Pope's part. These may sometimes have had their origin in the carelessness of the proof-reader. They could have been retained, however, only by the contributory negligence of the editor. Take, as an illustration, the passage in 'The Tempest' in which Caliban, in his new-born zeal for

[1] Pope's Shakespeare, vol. iii. p. 152. (This volume is paged twice from 91 to 203.)

[2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iii. p. 310.

[3] Ibid. vol. i. p. 384.

Stephano, promises to procure for him "young scamels from the rock."[1] From the beginning this passage has been a puzzle. The scamel is a dweller of the rocks only in that enchanted island in which the scene of the play is laid. Nowhere else has its existence been traced. The term has hitherto defied all conjectures which all men agree in accepting as satisfactory. Accordingly, the mystery which from the first surrounded it still envelops it. Theobald in his text substituted for it *shamois;* but suggested as possible readings *sea-malls* or *stannels*. Pope left it as he found it, but made no comment and attempted no explanation. But he contributed to the passage an additional mystery of his own. In both of his editions Caliban tells his new-chosen lord that he would get him "young scamels of the ock." Of this new reading Theobald said nothing.

No one who knows anything of Pope could expect that the revelation made of his indolence and incapacity would ever be forgiven. Nor was the poet confounded, though he was irritated, by the favor with which the new edition was received. The 'Grub-street Journal' might flinch; but no thought occurred to him of following in its footsteps. Still he made no direct reply to the criticism passed upon the way he had done his work. He recognized the wisdom of ignoring the exposure of blunders which it would have been worse than folly to attempt to defend. He was also aware of the advantage a great popular author gains in any controversy by merely maintaining the same attitude. No one was ever less animated than Pope with the spirit of the gen-

[1] Act ii., scene 2.

uine scholar in preferring truth to victory. It was the latter alone for which he contended; and for securing it no one believed more firmly in the impolicy of retracting any charge, however unfounded, of acknowledging any error, however manifest, or of discontinuing any attacks upon an opponent. But he had no notion of descending into particulars. He was wise enough to know that it was only by indirect methods and glittering generalities that he could hope to break the force of the disclosure which had been made of his negligence and incompetence. To these methods he at once resorted.

Mallet's 'Epistle on Verbal Criticism' was brought out again the following month as if it were a new work.[1] An extract from it attacking Theobald was furthermore inserted in the most widely circulated magazine of the period.[2] In the undated edition of 'The Dunciad,' pretty certainly belonging to 1734, he printed these same lines, and with them some remarks which held, with slight verbal changes, their place in all later editions till the recast of the whole poem in 1743. It was a general criticism of Theobald's work, conveyed in some sentences added to the note, which contained the false assertion that Theobald was in the habit of contributing frequent emendations of Shakespeare to 'Mist's Journal.' "He since," were the further words, "published an edition of Shakespear, with alterations of the text, upon bare conjectures either of his own, or any others who sent them to him, to which Mr. *M.*

[1] See advertisement in 'Grub-street Journal,' No. 218, Feb. 28, 1734.
[2] Gentleman's Magazine, vol. iv. p. 135, March, 1734.

alludes in these verses of his excellent poem on Verbal Criticism:

> "'He with low industry goes gleaning on,
> From good, from bad, from mean, neglecting none:
> His brother bookworm so, on shelf or stall,
> Will feed alike on Woolston and on Paul—
> Such the grave bird in northern seas is found,
> (Whose name a Dutchman only knows to sound)
> Where'er the king of fish moves on before,
> This humble friend attends from shore to shore;
> With eye still earnest, and with bill declined,
> He picks up what his patron drops behind;
> With such choice cates his palate to regale,
> And is the careful Tibbald of a whale.'"[1]

Exhibitions of petty spite like these had little or no effect at the time. In fact the repute of Theobald's work continued long to maintain itself over those which speedily followed—not merely over those which with all its defects it was plainly seen to surpass, but even over that of Capell, which the men of that period failed utterly to appreciate. It was in another way and through other agencies that Pope was enabled to make his hostile opinion of his rival prevail. During all these years he had been laboring in a field where the harvest was great and the reward he received abundant. Towards securing one point of vantage he had unceasingly directed his efforts. He reached it and held it firmly against all his adversaries. The result was that what Pope could never have accomplished directly, he succeeded in doing indirectly. The position he gained gave him a superiority over Theobald in the estimate of men

[1] Note to line 164 of Book 1, 'Dunciad' (n. d.), p. 97.

against which the superiority of his opponent in the particular field where they had come into conflict did not enable him to maintain his ground. This fact will come out distinctly in the later account of the controversy.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SPREAD OF POPE'S INFLUENCE

Even in a generation which had the slightest possible appreciation of what constituted scholarship in English, Pope's inferiority was fully recognized whenever the real questions in dispute between him and Theobald came up for consideration. That fact the comparative sale of the two editions proves incontestably. The superiority of the latter work was not to be shaken by any direct assault. It might have been supposed, therefore, that Theobald would emerge triumphant from the controversy. But there was an ally fighting on Pope's side that was worth the whole host of his volunteer assistants and hired retainers. He had genius; at best his adversaries had but talent. It was genius, too, peculiarly suited to the taste of his age. It brought him immense popularity; and he added to the effect it wrought by putting forth unceasing activity in his own behalf. Before his genius the efforts of his antagonists proved less and less potent with the general public. Belief in it, great as it had been previously, was immensely broadened and deepened in the decade which followed the publication of 'The Dunciad.' During that period he produced a number of poems which lifted him to a height of intellectual eminence never so

universally recognized by contemporaries in the case of any other author of our literature. This was supplemented by a series of contrivances which raised him in the opinion of a majority of the men of the time to a moral elevation equally lofty. The success in the one case was legitimate; in the other it was more than illegitimate, it was fraudulent. None the less was it then regarded by the world as genuine.

The exact character of Pope has always been one of the most puzzling problems which the student of English literary history has been called upon to solve. A work like this, dealing with but one side of it, and by no means a pleasing side, gives of it almost inevitably a distorted view. Yet to the harshest judgment in the way of utter condemnation there is one sufficient reply. During his whole life a large number of persons, distinguished by worth and ability, were Pope's warm friends. Those of them who died before him were devoted to him to the last; those who survived him remained faithful to his memory. Doubtless some, among the many with whom he associated intimately, attached themselves to him from motives purely selfish. Others there were who were attracted by his genius and his intellectual eminence. Their homage was to the poet, and not to the man. But there can be no question as to the genuine and unselfish affection felt by others. No man receives and retains the enthusiastic devotion of a large body of friends without having positive qualities which demand and deserve it.

Pope's nature was in fact both affectionate and benevolent. His regard for those he loved found its fullest

manifestation in the devotion he exhibited to his mother. But to all with whom he was connected by ties of kinship or affection he continued attached through good report and ill report, through all changes of circumstance or reverses of fortune. Never was there a man more loyal to his friends. Their interests he was ever eager to subserve; to be of help to them he gave time and thought and money. No one felt more keenly than he the vacancy occasioned by their absence or death. But his benevolence extended beyond his immediate circle. If he looked out for his own advantage in securing for himself what he had earned; if at times he drove a hard bargain when he could well have afforded to be generous; no one was more open-handed than he in giving to those who for any reason had excited his compassion. Add to this that in an age when the character of men of letters had been largely degraded by fawning upon men of wealth and position, Pope had an honorable desire to owe his support to his own exertions. He was utterly free from the contemptible vanity from which his literary contemporaries and successors suffered, that it was not the province of a gentleman to receive money for what he wrote. He occupies a prominent place on the roll of authors, containing among others the great names of Shakespeare and Tennyson, who have made their fortune by the pen. For the sake of securing and maintaining independence he husbanded his resources. Because he did so, he was charged with greed for money, with avarice. But to those who knew how he spent what he earned, who knew in consequence the genuine be-

nevolence of his nature, he could appeal confidently in the picture he drew of himself in his writings, if in this portrayal he had exaggerated the lineaments.

So much must in justice be said in a work which is forced to portray the darker side of a character in some ways estimable. But he who wishes to retain admiration and even respect for Pope must sedulously refrain from looking too minutely into his dealings with those with whom he came into collision in even the slightest degree. An atmosphere of deceit, chicanery, and fraud envelops in such cases everything he did or said. The account given here of his course in relation to Theobald shows of itself that to carry out his ends there was no form of equivocation to which he would not resort, no kind of misrepresentation in which he would not indulge, no meanness of trickery to which he would not stoop. There is no author of his rank and genius who ever engaged in more disreputable devices to raise his own reputation or to ruin that of his antagonists or supposed antagonists. No assertion of his can be trusted whenever it was his interest to make things look different from what they really were. There was in his nature an inherent love of intrigue. His friends could not well help being aware of it as well as his enemies. But as it was manifested towards the men they disliked or towards whom they felt indifference, they called it strategy. At worst they looked upon it as a mere weakness, a petty flaw which had even the effect of making his other qualities shine out more brilliantly by contrast.

But devious as was the path he trod, there can be no

denial of the skill with which he trod it. Never had any one the like success in securing by worse than questionable means the most exalted reputation for integrity. He imposed largely upon his contemporaries; upon posterity, until a comparatively late period, he has imposed even more largely. His good fortune in this matter was due mainly to the extravagant estimate which came to be taken of his genius and of the loftiness of his character. The latter was largely the consequent of the former. The men who admired him believed in him implicitly and believed whatever he said about himself or others. A certain respect must always be paid to the generous if misplaced devotion which genius inspires. The partisans of Pope reverenced an ideal creation which the author had skilfully fashioned. What is now known to every student of the period, what was in a measure known to a goodly number at the time, would not have been credited by the poet's admirers, had one risen from the dead to confirm its truth. Before the combined agencies of his then accepted intellectual and moral greatness his enemies went down. If in his direct attacks upon Theobald he failed, indirectly he was successful in converting actual defeat into apparent victory.

Few men of our day comprehend the commanding intellectual position held by Pope during the latter period of his life and for a long period after his death. There has never been anything approaching it in the history of our own literature or of any literature. In the opinion of vast numbers he was not merely the greatest English poet of his time, but the greatest English poet of all time; not merely the greatest of English

poets, but the greatest of all poets that ever existed. Even those who took the lowest estimate of his character — and of such there was no small number — entertained the highest admiration for his genius. They expressed themselves with an extravagance of praise which astounds the modern reader, too apt to go to the other extreme of unwarranted depreciation. They did not content themselves with according him mere greatness; to him belonged perfect greatness. It was assumed by his friends as a matter of course; it was conceded by the indifferent and even by those personally hostile. As one illustration out of many, a poem appeared in 1733 entitled "An Epistle to the Little Satyrist of Twickenham." It was full of the severest reflections upon Pope's character. It spoke of him as an object of universal scorn. It charged him with being under the influence of ill-nature, spleen, envy, malice, and avarice. Yet it admitted that not only in early youth did he surpass others, but that his powers had increased with advancing years,

> "Till to perfection you at last arriv'd,
> Which none have e'er excell'd that ever liv'd." [1]

This was no sentiment of a solitary individual. It was a widespread feeling at the time; and it did not die out suddenly. If anything the belief increased in strength after Pope's death. We can get some idea of its force by the few verses summing up his character which were immediately produced by the man against whom for a quarter of a century the poet had been directing the shafts of his satire. The year before Pope

[1] Page 5.

died Colley Cibber had been substituted in place of Theobald as the hero of the Dunciad. He had every reason to feel and express the bitterest resentment against the author of the satire, so far as a nature almost absolutely free from rancor could entertain such a sentiment. Yet of his persistent detractor he said in all sincerity in the poem which he called an epitaph,

"None e'er reached such heights of Helicon."[1]

If men who felt hostility, or had a right to feel hostility, could indulge in tributes of this sort to his greatness, we can easily imagine what would be the attitude of the so-called impartial or of the partisan. Two or three quotations will suffice to show their point of view. In 1752 Chesterfield wrote to a foreign correspondent that in the face of the collective pedants of the universe he dared to say that the Epistles and Satires of Pope had all the good sense and propriety of Horace's with a thousand times more spirit.[2] A much more emphatic opinion of the poet's abilities had been expressed a few years before by a somewhat noted miscellaneous author of the time. In a treatise published in May, 1747,[3] William Guthrie was good enough to commend Shakespeare and Otway as dramatists. He added, however, that he was not afraid to say that when "they commenced poets, they make a sorry figure." Nor was he further afraid to declare that similar would have been the fate of "the greatest of our modern poets, and per-

[1] Scots Magazine, June, 1744, vol. vi. p. 327.
[2] Letter to Kreuningen, July 7, 1752.
[3] Guthrie, 'Remarks on Tragedy,' p. 27.

haps a poet whose superior antiquity never saw, and whose equal posterity must not expect," if he in turn had attempted to write a tragedy.

But a more striking instance still is the dispute that went on between Spence and Henry Brooke, who preserves a lingering reputation as a novelist, though his poetry has long been forgotten. The former maintained that Pope was the greatest poet the world had ever produced. The latter at the time of the conversation was unwilling to take ground so extreme. He declared that Virgil gave him equal pleasure, Homer equal warmth, Shakespeare greater rapture, and Milton more astonishment. But he saw later, according to his own assertion, that he had been indisposed to accord the poet his due praise. He had not then really entered into the spirit of his work. He had now come, he said, to the conclusion that any one of Pope's original pieces was indisputably a more finished and perfect piece than had ever been written by any one man. But his genius was dwarfed to the eye by the excellence of so many different parts. Each distinct performance was as the performance of a separate author. As no single one was large enough to contain the poet in his full dimensions, he though perfectly drawn appeared too much in miniature. Brooke was inclined to be angry that Pope had devoted so much time to improving Homer. He should have spent it in excelling him in his own way.[1]

In so expressing himself Brooke declared that he was speaking "the ruder parts" of his sincerity. Imagination exhausts itself in conceiving what he could have

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. x. p. 220.

said had he set out to impart the more urbane revelation of his feelings. But the view he took, however ridiculous it seems to us, was shared by large numbers of his contemporaries, perhaps by the majority. A few years after Pope's death a similar attitude was assumed by the essayist John Brown. This author is now known to most of us, so far as he is known to any of us, by the treatise called 'An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times.' This work was published in 1757, just as England had entered upon that career of conquest and glory which she achieved in the Seven Years' War. It demonstrated in a way that could not be gainsaid that, in consequence of the general prevalence of luxury and effeminacy, the country was on the downward road, that she was henceforth destined to failure and to take a distinctly lower place among the nations. Brown's literary judgments were on a par with his political. He wrote a poetical 'Essay on Satire,' which was printed in 1748 in Dodsley's 'Collection.' In it the author laid down the proposition that no one could express adequately the greatness of Pope's genius unless he had himself the genius of Pope:

> "Who yonder star's effulgence can display
> Unless he dip his pencil in the ray?
> Who paint a God, unless the God inspire?
> Who catch the lightning but the speed of fire?
> So, mighty Pope, to make thy genius known,
> All pow'r is weak, all numbers — but thy own."[1]

As if a belief of this sort were not enough, Pope succeeded in gaining with the multitude of readers a

[1] Dodsley's 'Collection,' vol. iii. p. 335.

reputation for moral elevation which was the complement of his intellectual greatness. This was as little the result of accident as it was of desert. It was a direct consequence of patient and persistent effort directed to that very end. In its way it was for Pope a greater triumph than was his translation of Homer. It was achieved in the face of difficulties to all appearance far more insuperable; for his devious ways were well known to numbers among his contemporaries. Any exposure of them, however, he could and did profess to regard as the outcome of envy, hatred, and malignity. His admirers, who were legion, were certain to disbelieve what he was charged with doing and were equally certain to believe everything about himself which he kept saying. Hence, while engaged in practices from which an honorable man would have shrunk with disgust, while making declarations which a truthful man would have regarded with abhorrence, his voice could be constantly heard, enunciating the noblest sentiments, proclaiming the loftiness of his motives, the integrity of his character, his scorn of everything that was underhand and discreditable and mendacious. To the modern reader, now rendered fully aware of his method of proceeding, there is something almost comical in the assertion he made in one of the greatest of his poems, that it was

> "One poet's praise
> That if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways!"[1]

If there was one quality of character of which Pope had seemingly no appreciation, it was that of manliness. Yet

[1] Epistle to Arbuthnot, l. 377.

he deceived others as to his possession of it; let us charitably hope that he deceived himself.

It was about 1730 that Pope started out actively in the practice of the profession of being a good man. Henceforth he was to be animated by an overpowering love of virtue and an overpowering hatred of vice. The attitude he took then he maintained until the day of his death. His reputation as a poet, he asserted, or intimated, was but little in his thoughts; what he desired to be considered was a man of virtue. His heart, he wrote to Broome, was better than his head.[1] Broome's opinion did not entirely coincide with that of his correspondent; but he wisely judged it best to keep it to himself. To Aaron Hill, Pope wrote that he had never thought much of his own poetical capacity; but he knew that his moral life was much superior to that of most of the wits of the day.[2] Hill brushed aside almost contemptuously this shallow pretence of indifference to literary reputation; but Pope was wiser than his correspondent. He knew that in the controversies in which he was concerned, reputation as a man of virtue would stand him in much better stead than reputation as a man of letters. He was, therefore, not to be deterred from continuing to give expression to the same admirable sentiments. It might be, he conceded, that it was his poetry alone that would cause him to be remembered. "But it is my morality only," he continued solemnly, "that must make me beloved or happy." Errors in his writings he was willing to

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 160, letter to Broome, May 2, 1730.

[2] Ibid. vol. x. p. 10, letter of January 26, 1731.

confess; "but of my life and manners," he added, "I do not yet repent one jot."[1]

Tributes, therefore, to Pope's intellectual greatness, he let it be understood, could never be paid him at the expense of his uprightness. "I much more resent," he added, "any attempt against my moral character, which I know to be unjust, than any to lessen my poetical one, which for all I know may be very just."[2] This fiction of a preference for being a man of virtue to being a man of genius he never ceased to uphold. Seven years later he wrote again to Hill that his character as an honest man he desired to have spared. On the other hand, anything could be said in praise or blame of him as a poet, and it would remain unanswered.[3] This pretended lack of concern about his literary, and deep-seated regard for his moral, reputation crops out every now and then in his correspondence. It even extended to the assertion that he, perhaps the most sensitive and vindictive author that ever flourished, had become entirely free from the slight traces of those characteristics which once had possibly been latent in his nature. "I never had," he wrote to Lord Marchmont in 1741, "any uneasy desire of fame or keen resentment of injuries, and now both are asleep together."[4] This picture of the halcyon repose which had overtaken his nature required revision the very next year. Then he set out recasting 'The Dunciad' in consequence of the furious anger into

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. x. p. 19, letter to Hill, Feb. 5, 1731.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid. p. 53, letter of June 9, 1738.
[4] Ibid. p. 166, letter of Oct. 10, 1741.

which he was thrown by the Letter addressed to him by Cibber.

Many outside circumstances contributed to the spread of the belief he was anxious to inspire. Important among them was the character of his later writings. The line of poetry which Pope soon took up after the publication of 'The Dunciad' was peculiarly favorable to the creation and extension among the multitude of that opinion of his moral character which he sought to have established. He thenceforth produced largely pieces of a didactic character; but didactic poetry written with a point and fervor and fire the want of which has usually constituted its most distinguishing characteristic. To use his own words, he left off wandering in the maze of fancy, but "stooped to truth and moralized his song." It was during the years in which Theobald's edition of Shakespeare was preparing for the press that Pope kept constantly bringing out a succession of works which spread far and wide his reputation not merely as a poet, but as a moralist of the highest type. It was the year following the publication of that edition that witnessed the culmination and complete success of these efforts.

This year, 1735, was an eventful one in Pope's life. During it he may be said to have set the seal upon his reputation for the highest moral excellence, while at the same time extending and enhancing his literary fame. He opened it with one of the most brilliant pieces he ever wrote. This was the 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,' already mentioned several times. Under the guise of an apology for his life it was a renewed attack upon the whole host of his adversaries, containing, as it were by

accident, glowing panegyrics upon himself, wrung from him with apparent naturalness by the calumnies with which he had been wantonly pursued for years and which he had hitherto borne in silence. Never was a work better fitted to effect the object designed. The piece, to be sure, is full of disingenuous assertions and contained a number of positively false statements; but none of these things were its readers in a position to know. In it was insidiously inculcated the view, which he was afterwards to elaborate still more fully, that in whatever he wrote he was animated by the loftiest motives. In satirizing those he disliked he was simply laboring in the cause of virtue.

Theobald was far from being the main occasion of this production; but as an incidental one he had in it his place. Into it was woven, with changes and improvements, the attack on verbal criticism which had already done duty in the so-called last volume of the 'Miscellanies.' Its specific attack was aimed at him; but the "sanguine Sewall," who had been his associate in the earlier form of the satire,[1] was now replaced by the "slashing Bentley." This most effective misrepresentation of his critic, Pope had embodied now in a production which justly excited the highest enthusiasm of his admirers. It was circulated far and wide. From the day of its publication to the present time it has never ceased to exert a damaging effect upon Theobald's reputation.

The 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' gave the impression that Pope was even more virtuous than he was great. Another agency now came in not merely to confirm this

[1] See page 301.

view, but to establish the truth of it beyond question. This was the publication of his correspondence. It came out a little later in this same year, 1735, from the printing-house of Curll. Its immediate effect was to raise the popular conception of Pope's character to the highest point. The trickery has now been laid bare by which the poet contrived to bring about an apparently pirated publication of his letters, thereby forcing him to follow it by a later edition authorized by himself. In his own age the fact was more than suspected; to several persons it was perhaps actually known. But there is something known now that was not even suspected then. The lucky chance that led to the discovery, about a half-century ago, of Caryll's copies of Pope's letters disclosed the various ways in which he had tampered with his own correspondence in order to prepare it for publication. The letters as printed were frequently not the letters as written. The correspondence, in short, was to no small extent a manufactured one. It had been manufactured too for the express purposes of fortifying statements made by the poet, which were not only doubtful, but had been doubted; and even more for the sake of extending his reputation for being actuated by the loftiest motives. Part of it had not been written to the persons to whom it purported to have been written. Furthermore there was a limited portion of it which had pretty clearly never been written to any one at all.

Still, as the manipulation to which this correspondence had been subjected was unknown, both at the time and for more than a century after, English literary criticism and literary history have been naturally permeated with

false impressions about the poet and his contemporaries caused by the belief in its genuineness. Nor have we as yet recovered entirely from its effects. We can in some cases, to be sure, arrive at fairly certain conclusions. We can no longer doubt that a portion of the letters nominally sent to Addison were never received by the man to whom, as printed, they were addressed. We can now guess pretty accurately the nature of the relations between the two authors and comprehend the difference between what actually took place and what Pope said took place. We are further safe in saying that he published a reconstructed correspondence with Wycherley. This he did, according to his own account, "to rescue his memory" from the hands of "an unlicensed and presumptuous mercenary," — by whom he meant Theobald. He forgot, however, to mention that this unlicensed and presumptuous mercenary was the very man who had been selected by the family to edit the posthumous works of the dramatist. We can feel altogether confident it was by interpolations and alterations and omissions in this correspondence that he succeeded in producing upon the world the impression that the man whose memory he set out to rescue was a vain, contemptible and irritable old dotard, who resented the good advice given him by his young friend. Still we cannot overcome entirely the influence of the printed page. To this the publication of the original letters, whenever they existed at all, would have unquestionably furnished an ample corrective.

The correspondence itself of Pope is not really interesting. His prose was much inferior to his poetry;

but the prose of his letters was much inferior to his other prose. A large number of them indeed hardly deserve the name of letters. There is nothing about them at all spontaneous. They are little moral essays which produce the impression that the writer had set out to think noble thoughts in order to utter them. But they fully accomplished for him the object for which they were intended. Even before they were published he had largely succeeded in creating the belief that he was animated by the most exalted motives. Virtue and verse, wrote one of his contemporary panegyrists, were the objects that filled his soul. But his manipulated correspondence now proved in a way that could not be gainsaid that the claims he had made for himself in his 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' were fully justified. Here was what must have seemed to men the unanticipated revelation of what was in his inmost heart, disclosed to those he loved in the artless confidence which is begot of the sanctity of private communication. Who could rise from reading these unguarded effusions of the soul poured forth in the privacy of intimate friendship, but now exposed to the world by the machinations of a scoundrelly publisher, without feeling that in their writer was revealed one of the most unselfish and benevolent of men, one of the purest and loftiest of natures, indifferent to mere literary fame, but consumed with a sacred love for the advancement of morality and virtue?

The result of these machinations, manipulations, and fraudulent devices was that during the last years of his life Pope occupied a position in popular estimation that has never been held by any other author in our litera-

ture. He was regarded as not only the sublimest of poets, but as the best of men. In the eyes of his admirers he was given up to the pursuit of virtue. In the seclusion of his home rolled unheeded over his head the din made by those who resented the fact that he was the unflinching foe of the vain, the proud, and the wicked. Never before or since has moral pre-eminence been obtained by means so immoral. He stood forth to his admiring countrymen as the champion of virtue and the scourge of vice. In the opinions of large numbers his utterances made or unmade reputations. So great is the power of self-delusion that it is not impossible, perhaps it is probable, that Pope believed fully in himself. At an earlier period he assured Swift, in all apparent sincerity, that he would not render the characters he portrayed "less important and less interesting by sparing vice and folly or by betraying the cause of truth and virtue."

But whatever in his secret heart he thought of himself, there is no question as to what was thought of him by his multitude of readers. In their eyes he was one who loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore he was an object of hatred to wicked men. There was a minority — and during his life a strong and not uninfluential minority — who saw through the hollowness of his pretensions and recognized the wide difference between his professions and his practices. Their feelings were well expressed by Curll, who as a rascal himself had a keen scent for rascality in others. In a letter to Broome he expressed the then not uncommon opinion that Pope was as well acquainted with the art of evasion

as he was with the art of poetry.[1] "Crying came our bard, into the world," he said later in print, "but lying, it is greatly to be feared, he will go out of it." But the opinions of those who disbelieved in him carried little weight outside of the circle to which they belonged. Any voice lifted up in protest was largely drowned in the clamorous enthusiasm of his admirers. As those too who were fully acquainted with his devices left behind them no record of what they knew, and rarely even of what they thought, the information they possessed and the beliefs they held usually died with them. Pope's reputation for virtue came in consequence to increase after the death of himself and of those who knew him too well.

So well and widely established became this estimate of the purity and loftiness of his character that, if we can trust the testimony of the swarm of elegies that followed immediately upon his decease and indeed continued for several years afterward, the death of Pope was not so much to be deplored as a loss to English literature, irreparable as that was, as it was a loss to English morals. To adopt the language of a writer who was so little one of his devotees that he mingled censure with his praise, "universal goodness felt the shock."[2] It was the prevalent feeling that now he was gone, wicked men would come forth from their hiding-places and wickedness would once more abound in the land. Dodsley burst out in a eulogistic elegy upon the

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. viii. p. 168, letter of Curll to Broome, July 22, 1735.

[2] London Magazine, vol. xiii. p. 461, September, 1744.

dead poet in which he gave vent to his grief at this particular prospect.[1] According to him,

> "Vice, now secure, her blushless front shall raise,
> And all her triumphs be thro' Britain borne,
> Whose worthless sons for guilt shall purchase praise,
> Nor dread the hand that pointed them to scorn."

The following epigram conveying the same idea is reported to have been spoken extempore on the death of the poet:

> "Vice now may lift aloft her speckled head,
> And front the sun undaunted: Pope is dead."[2]

The periodical publications of the time and the times immediately succeeding contain plenty of revelations of this sort of feeling. According to contemporary testimony there was no longer any possible escape from the reign of wickedness. More than a year after Pope was dead, a bard who called himself "a young gentleman" attempted, as he said, an epitaph on the poet. He was manifestly a very young gentleman. The idea pervading his piece was the hopelessness of saving the world from ruin, since the main bulwark against the encroachments of iniquity had been taken away. In the following lines the writer gave expression to his sense of the peril that was threatening the future of the nation:

> "Now thou art gone, O ever wondrous bard,
> Who shall foul vice's rapid course retard?

[1] Gentleman's Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 447, August, 1744.
[2] Ibid. p. 386, July, 1744.

Who shall in virtue's sacred cause arise?
Who lash the villain who the law defies?
Or brand the atheist who his god denies?
These did thy volumes, fraught with vast delight,
And virtue shin'd by thee supremely bright.
But now she droops, flown is her pleasing hope,
Virtue now mourns that e'er she lost her Pope." [1]

About this same time William Thompson, a poet once somewhat highly thought of but now forgotten, announced that the dreaded calamity had already arrived. There was no longer any chance for virtue to maintain her ground. The mournful result is indicated in lines celebrating the intellectual greatness of Pope, but diverging in the following words to his moral greatness:

"Born to improve the age and cheat mankind
Into the road of honor! — Vice again
The gilded chariot drives: — For he is dead." [2]

This view of the poet's character was neither confined to a limited number nor to a limited period. Plenty of illustrations of it could be quoted. Several years later the Reverend John Delap, a writer never much regarded and now never remembered, reflected the general sentiment in one of his elegies, in which he referred to Pope as being the "sole terror of a venal age." [3] Mason, in that dreadful monody entitled 'Musæus,' not content with celebrating the poet's greatness as a poet, extolled the courage he had evinced in carrying on his warfare

[1] London Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 512, October, 1745.
[2] Thompson's 'Sickness,' Book 2 (published April, 1745).
[3] London Magazine, vol. xxix. p. 260, May, 1760.

against vice in the highest places. He had been the one author who

> "could brave
> The venal statesman or the titled slave:
> Brand frontless vice, strip all her stars and strings,
> Nor spare her basking in the smile of kings."

This belief in the myth of Pope's virtue, though doubtless having many private disbelievers, met with scarcely an expression of public dissent till the last decade of the eighteenth century. Indeed Hayley discovered that it was philanthropy pure and simple that had led the poet to the composition of his satires. For the sake of overthrowing vice he sacrificed the performance of what he could have achieved in the higher fields of literature. "His moral virtues," wrote Hayley, "have had a tendency to diminish his poetical reputation."[1] Faith in this fiction of his surpassing virtue gave way with the better knowledge of the period which men came to possess. But how late it retained its hold any one can see for himself in Thackeray's 'Lectures on the English Humorists,' a work belonging to the middle of the nineteenth century.

Against a moral and intellectual reputation of this sort it was useless for any ordinary man to contend. The justice of his quarrel did not enter into the matter. The assertions and insinuations of the poet had materially affected the estimate held of the well-beloved and universally admired Addison. What chance was there for an inferior author, no matter what his special excellence, when pitted against him who was not merely the most

[1] Essay on Epic Poetry (1782), p. 284.

brilliant genius of his age, but was also looked upon as the heaven-sent champion of virtue? If a man so high in rank and reputation as Bolingbroke could encounter obloquy for his attack on Pope after Pope was dead, we can understand the feelings that would be manifested while Pope was living, towards an obscure scholar who had criticised him unfavorably or had disparaged anything he had done. That a writer whose life in the eyes of his admirers had been consecrated to the loftiest of objects, who was not merely the greatest intellectual ornament of his age but had steadily borne aloft the gonfalon of virtue against the thronging hosts of vice — that such a man should be stigmatized for indifference and inefficiency and neglect of duty merely, as it was intimated, because he had committed some such trivial offence as leaving a comma in a wrong place, provoked resentment at the author of the charges, and not any inquiry as to whether there was either truth or weight in the charges themselves.

As indications of what came more and more to be a growing sentiment, it is worth while to quote specimens of the effusions which cropped up in abundance during the fourth and fifth decades of the eighteenth century. Page after page could be filled with the voluntary outpourings which then appeared of extremest admiration of the poet himself, and of equally fervent detestation of his critics. Two, however, will be sufficient to give a conception of the estimate taken of Theobald's work by the partisans of the man whose errors he had exposed. The first is a copy of verses occasioned by reading Pope's 'Essay on Man' and his 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.'

It was the work of a certain person named Humphrey, who among his other judgments considered Handel a savage. Several of the poet's adversaries fell under his lash in the following lines:

> "Let then that Paris either rhyme or fiddle,
> Let Welsted lie and honest Tibbalds piddle;
> Let Budgell's frenzy start from Bee to Bee,
> What are such animals as these to thee?
> What canst thou suffer from so mean a race,
> Whose malice is humanity's disgrace?" [1]

This is general; the extract from the second piece is more specific. It celebrated the courage of the poet in confronting his critics, by whom is meant here Theobald:

> "Thrice happy you who dare the critic's rage,
> The tedious labors of the piddling page,
> The dupe of words, the toils to nonsense free,
> Sworn foe to virtue, ere they envied thee." [2]

This last piece is of special interest because in it was apparently contained the first indication of a view which was in time to become widely received. It was based upon an entire misconception of the parts played respectively by Pope and Theobald, and the relations of the men to each other. The notion came to prevail that the collision between the two men arose from their both entering at the same time upon the preparation of rival editions of Shakespeare. In Capell's account of the work previously done upon the text we find belief in this fanciful story full-grown. His treatment of his

[1] London Magazine, vol. iv. p. 35, January, 1735.
[2] Gentleman's Magazine, October 1735, vol. v. p. 610.

predecessor reconciles one in a measure to the injustice of the treatment he himself received. It was fully as unfair as that to which he was subjected later, and was characterized by the same invincible prejudice and ignorance. He represented that the deficiencies of Rowe's edition were so distinctly seen that to repair them, two gentlemen set out at once. These were Theobald and Pope. The latter was the first in the field. According to this veracious narrative the former was retarded in consequence. This utterly untrue account of the origin of the hostility between the two men added simply another to the countless crop of falsehoods which sprang up on every occasion when Theobald's name was mentioned.

Capell was unquestionably influenced in his judgment by the exaggerated admiration of the dead poet which was then prevalent and from which no one could free himself. Nothing indeed gives one a higher conception of the authority wielded by a man of genius in a matter in which he is no authority at all, than the respect which came to be paid to Pope's edition of Shakespeare after the first reaction against it had spent its force. The disposition soon showed itself to minimize its defects and to accord it credit for what not the slightest credit is due. No satisfactory defence could be set up for its textual correctness after Theobald's exposure of its blunders. But another view of it soon made its appearance and was stoutly maintained. According to this, it was characterized by something far better than mere correction of verbal errors and wrong punctuation. It was distinguished by a peculiar quality called taste. In this it was pre-eminent. No one sought to grapple with

the problem how superior taste could be indicated by the adoption of readings which convey a sense distinctly inferior and sometimes convey no sense at all. With questions like these, Pope's partisans did not concern themselves. They were ready to concede that he might at times have been blamably neglectful of petty details. But all this was far more than counterbalanced by the one pervading characteristic which signally distinguished his edition. It simply abounded in taste. In this quality Theobald, on the other hand, though superior in minute accuracy, was grossly deficient. Such a view of him was so far from being based upon any evidence that it was in defiance of all the evidence procurable. It was, however, soon embodied in that collection of notions and fancies and prejudices and traditional beliefs which we dub with the title of literary criticism. No epithet has been applied to Theobald more frequently than 'tasteless.' It came to be one of the regular stock phrases which the professional reviewer who knew nothing about him felt it incumbent to employ.

This estimate of the different characteristics of the two men and of their work upon Shakespeare showed itself soon after the publication of Theobald's edition. Some idea of the belief that came to prevail can be gained from an extract taken from a periodical of the time. It is of no value in itself, but it has an interest of its own for the indication it furnishes of the reluctance which was felt even at that early period to acknowledge Theobald's superiority, and the disposition to cavil on the part of those who did not venture to condemn. The periodical in question, which began its

career in December, 1734, was entitled 'The Weekly Oracle or Universal Library.' This contained monthly an extra sheet given up to queries and replies. One inquiry addressed to it was in regard to certain points connected with Shakespeare. It ended with asking which one of the three editions before the public was the best to purchase. The answer, after conveying rather more than the usual amount of misinformation in regard to the points about which information had been sought, concluded with this critical estimate in which the writer remained faithful to the title of his paper by imparting what he did not know in the following oracular style:

"Mr. Rowe does not seem to have been a critic of any distinction: Mr. Pope's taste, we are inclined to think, preferable to both the others; but Mr. Theobald has spared no labour, whatever he may want in taste. However, he has embarrassed his volumes with many useless and impertinent and bad notes; and has left some passages unexplained; an instance of which we gave in the 6th Oracle." [1]

So prevalent did this notion become, so persistent was its continuance, that time, which has shattered completely so many other beliefs connected with Pope, has left this one somewhat unimpaired. Yet any claim of his superiority over his rival editor in regard to taste, so far as Shakespeare was concerned, was full as baseless as would have been any claim for him of superiority in textual emendation. Both men were too much dominated by the views prevalent in their age to do justice in certain ways to the great dramatist. But this influ-

[1] Page 144, No. 12 of the 'Weekly Oracle,' and No. 3 of the 'Questions and Answers.'

ence never gained the control of the one which it did of the other. Of that final result of exquisite taste, the peculiar knowledge of an author's style which enables the reader to detect the genuine from the spurious, Theobald possessed an altogether larger proportion than Pope. In this respect the critical attitude exhibited by the two men is suggestive. Pope threw out, as we have seen, the seven plays added to the third folio. But in the expression of opinion he went much farther. Of certain of those which he printed he conjectured that only some characters, some single scenes and perhaps a few particular passages constituted all that Shakespeare contributed to their text. Three of these were specified in the preface to his first edition; in that to the second he added a fourth, 'The Comedy of Errors.' It is not surprising to have 'Titus Andronicus' included among the three. It is somewhat astounding to find 'Love's Labor's Lost' in the number. But what are we to think of a critic's judgment and taste who did not consider 'The Winter's Tale' as having come throughout from the hands of Shakespeare?

No such gross deficiency in the sense of an author's style can be laid to Theobald's charge. On the other hand there are incidental notes scattered throughout his edition which show that at that early date he had anticipated some of the recognized results of modern scholarship. It is true he did little more than indicate them; had he not fallen on evil days and evil tongues he would in all probability have developed them at length. He followed Pope in limiting his edition to the thirty-six plays found in the folio of 1623. But of one of the

seven rejected, Pericles, he reinforced the assertions of previous critics, by declaring that certain portions of it were unquestionably Shakespeare's.[1] Furthermore he was unwilling to concede that the poet was the sole author of the three parts of 'King Henry VI.' They were in his opinion the compositions of others which had received from his hand finishing touches, because the numbers were more mean and prosaic than in the generality of his genuine plays.[2]

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iv. p. 20.
[2] Ibid. p. 110.

CHAPTER XXIII

DIFFICULTIES IN THEOBALD'S WAY

THE favor which Theobald's edition met at the outset it long continued to retain. For this there was ample reason. The confidence which had been felt in his ability to carry through his undertaking successfully had been justified by the result. It is well within bounds to say now that no such advance has been made by any single person upon previous conditions as was then made by him; nor for the acceptance of this view is it necessary to take into account the difficulties with which he had to contend. Of even more importance than the emendations he contributed was the course of conduct he indicated both by example and precept as necessary to follow in order to establish the genuine text. The theory he adopted may be given in his own words. "I ever labor," he wrote to Warburton, "to make the smallest deviation that I can possibly from the text; never to alter at all where I can by any means explain a passage into sense; nor ever by any emendations to make the author better when it is probable the text came from his own hands."[1] Words like these seem now of the nature of commonplace; yet it was

[1] Letter dated April 8, 1729, Nichols, vol. ii. p. 210.

many years after Theobald's death before they became generally accepted. That he himself did not always live up to this ideal may be pardoned to the weakness of human nature. Still, it was an ideal he held ever in view. The occasions in which he failed to attain it were usually due to the deference he felt for the opinion of his age or to imperfect knowledge or lack of knowledge on his part of what could hardly be said to be known to any one then.

The alterations from the text of previous editions which Theobald made ran up to the neighborhood of a thousand. This excludes those for which he gave the credit to Warburton. On the other hand it includes the restorations he introduced from the early quartos and folios. It further includes between two and three dozen which he had adopted at the suggestions of others — which he was always careful to acknowledge — and of two persons in particular. One of these was his friend Hawley Bishop. The two men for a long time met once a week to go over a play together and communicate to each other the results of their examination and conjectures. To Bishop we are indebted for two or three of the very happiest improvements which the text as originally printed has received. The other person was Styan Thirlby, a scholar of that time much addicted to controversy, drink, and Shakespeare study. But not only the most but much the most valuable of the changes and rectifications contained in Theobald's edition were entirely his own. He displayed indeed a happiness of emendation of corrupt passages which at times approaches almost the marvellous. In this par-

ticular he has never been surpassed; it is perhaps juster to say, he has never been equalled.

This sleuth-like sagacity has been more than once exemplified in the foregoing pages in the recital which has been given of corrections which have met the assent of all subsequent editors. Let us illustrate it further by another emendation to which, though generally received, exception has occasionally been taken in these later days. This will serve both to bring out sharply the difficulties under which the settlement of the text of Shakespeare sometimes labors, and also enable the reader who cares to look up the matter to appreciate the failure of the acutest modern students to rival the ingenuity of Theobald in this particular field. It is the following brief passage in 'Love's Labor's Lost,' in which a conversation is going on between the curate and the schoolmaster. This is the way it reads in Pope's edition, which is substantially the same as all preceding ones, including the earliest; save that in them for *scratch* appears either *scratcht*, *scarch*, or *search:*

"*Nathanael. Laus deo, bene intelligo.*

Holofernes. Bome boon for *boon prescian;* a little scratch, 't will serve."

What idea, if any, Pope got out of this unintelligible jargon he did not take the pains to communicate. He must have paid some attention to it, for it was in his edition that the form *scratch* first found place. Then came along the man who, we have been told for generations, was portentously dull. He altered the *bene* of Nathanael's speech to *bone*, which he explained as a vocative of address. This word, according to his theory,

the schoolmaster deems to be a mistake of the curate for the adverb, and therefore makes the following reply:

"*Bone?* — *bone*, for *benè*; Priscian a little scratch'd; 't will serve."

Whether Shakespeare so wrote the line or not, the passage now not only affords sense, but a sense so excellent that part of it has become a stock quotation; while everything else which has been proposed either gives no sense at all or sense most unsatisfactory. There is no more convincing argument for the correctness of Theobald's correction than are the few attempts which have been made to substitute other readings in its place.

But there was one person for whose assistance above all others Theobald was fervent in acknowledgment. This was Warburton. The fascination which this militant divine, or rather theological bully, exerted over many of his contemporaries is one of the most inexplicable facts in the literary history of the eighteenth century. Theobald was not exempt from feelings in which men far greater than he shared. He was never weary of extolling the merits of his "ingenious friend." Few there were that came to Theobald's aid in editing Shakespeare who escaped being termed 'ingenious.' No one worked harder than he that favorite eighteenth-century epithet. But to Warburton it was applied with lavish profusion. His name could hardly be mentioned — and it was mentioned very often — without being coupled with that adjective. There was little limit to the gratitude felt and expressed for the help he rendered. The volumes of Theobald's first edition are sprinkled all over with references to him, with compli-

mentary remarks about him, and further with scores — about three-score in fact — of explanations and critical observations to which his name is appended. He adopted into his text a great number of Warburton's corrections, almost invariably introducing them with a flourish of praise for their author.

Not indeed that Theobald accepted all that Warburton proposed. There was no small number — more than half a hundred — which his very deep and genuine regard for the man he delighted to call his friend could not induce him to tolerate. But though he dissented, he always gives the impression that he dissented with regret. If he refused to disturb the text so as to admit the proposed change, he usually made compensation by giving it a place in the notes, with Warburton's own reasons for the alteration. He professed himself unwilling that the reader should be deprived of the benefit of these happy conjectures. They were too fine, he said, too brilliant, even if not convincing, to be passed over in silence. It became therefore his care that they should not be lost to the world. Theobald's letters to Warburton are full of expressions of admiration and regard for the man, even when controverting the views he had advanced. His explications, he was wont to tell him, were elegant but altogether too refined. This last word was his polite synonym for far-fetched. For many of these proposed emendations of his friend he felt what he said of one of them, that it was "struck out in the flame of an unbounded spirit."[1]

No proper justice can be done to Theobald for what

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 340.

he accomplished unless we keep steadily in mind the fact that he was a pioneer in the business he undertook. As a pioneer, obstacles of which we rarely think lay in his path. The difficulties which confronted him confronted, to be sure, his predecessors. But they had not met them, they had evaded them. Though occupying the pioneer position, they made no effort to perform the pioneer work. Rowe can hardly be said to have recognized its necessity. Pope saw one part of it dimly, and expressed the importance of it strongly; but he hardly acted upon it at all. But outside of the collation of early copies he was as ignorant as was Rowe of what it was essential to have done. To take one instance out of several, neither of these editors had any idea of the simple but all-important duty of comparing the author's language with that of the original from which he had borrowed his incidents. Neither of them read carefully the English chroniclers to establish the text of the historical plays or the translation of Plutarch's 'Lives' to establish that of the Roman ones. The indebtedness of Shakespeare to Holinshed, not merely for the facts recorded but sometimes for the very words in which they were recorded, Theobald was the first to recognize distinctly and to set forth sharply. The name of that historian had been mentioned with others both by Langbaine and Gildon as one of the sources. But clearly neither of them had any conception of his special importance. Pope apparently did not know of his existence; at all events it is to Hall's chronicle that he makes the very few references which occur in his notes on the historical plays.

The combined efforts of scholars belonging to different periods and various nationalities have now brought material from every quarter to illustrate the text of Shakespeare, to elucidate the obscure and to clear up the apparently incomprehensible. Not a single one of the aids which now abound on every side existed when Theobald set out to edit the works of the dramatist. The literature of the Elizabethan age was doubtless cheap enough at the time, when it could be found; but much of it now familiar was hardly known about, and if known could not be secured. No great libraries had been provided to which the student could resort, sure of finding at his command all the materials requisite for pursuing his investigations. Information in the reach of every one now was then hardly accessible to any one. To procure it required laborious research, unless happy chance brought it to the attention. The difficulty which a man of limited means must have encountered in acquiring the most essential works might well have deterred from the undertaking a spirit much more adventurous than Theobald's, as well as one with a purse much better filled. To some extent his wants were temporarily supplied by men who appreciated his ability to perform the task he had set before himself. In the preface to his edition he expressed his thanks to the antiquary, Martin Folkes, for having furnished him with a copy of the first folio when he had not been able to meet with it among the booksellers.[1] To Coxeter he acknowledged his obligations for providing him with several of the old quarto plays which he at the time did not have in his own collection.

[1] Page lxvii.

But resources of this sort could not always be relied upon. In 1729 Theobald wrote to Warburton that he might probably get help for the explanation of certain passages from Ascham's 'Toxophilus.'[1] More than four years later when his edition of Shakespeare appeared, it was evident that he had not been able to secure anywhere a work which can now be met with everywhere.[2] He had heard also of Lodge's romance of 'Rosalynde.' This he supposed to be made up of a volume of poems in praise of his mistress called Rosalind. He fancied that could he get hold of the book, he might find in it the original of the canzonets in 'As you Like It' and perhaps in 'Love's Labor's Lost.'[3] But he never got a sight of the work. Hence he remained in ignorance of its real character, and also of the fact that the former play had been founded upon this prose romance.

Furthermore, to comprehend the difficulties which then beset a pioneer, it must not be overlooked that in consequence of the revolution of English speech about its literature, Shakespeare is much nearer to us than he was to the men of the first half of the eighteenth century. During the period following the Restoration the language of the dramatist was often spoken of as obsolete. To some extent it was then obsolete. Dryden more than once characterized it as unintelligible in places. For obvious reasons this condition of things has now disappeared almost wholly. A great writer, long and generally loved and admired and studied, imposes in

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 299.
[2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i. p. 410.
[3] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 578.

time his own vocabulary upon his readers. One result of the steadily increasing popularity of Shakespeare during the last two centuries has been to make many of his most peculiar methods of expression familiar. Words and phrases which are now found on every one's lips often conveyed no meaning to Theobald's contemporaries. They sounded strange and outlandish. Some familiar now to all highly educated men were incomprehensible then to the best scholars.

One has only to look at some of the wild guesses hazarded by Pope, or the words substituted by him for those of the original, to comprehend the difficulty of determining the meaning which an editor of that time was sure to encounter. Dictionaries of all sorts were imperfect. No general ones existed which contained even remotely the words or the meanings of the words found in the dramas. A concordance to Shakespeare's works now at every one's elbow was never even dreamed of then. So far from there being a special lexicon of his words, there was hardly even the pettiest of glossaries. The nearest approach to anything of the kind was a so-called one which appeared in the volume of Shakespeare's poems published in 1710 as a supplementary volume to Rowe's edition of the year previous. It was one of the scrappiest as well as the slightest of affairs. It was made up of words gathered without judgment and sometimes explained without knowledge. The whole number was much less than two hundred. The collection was in some particulars a linguistic curiosity. In this meager list were set words such as *carol*, *dulcet*, *dumps*, *foemen*, *gleeful*, *moody*, *tricksy*, and several

others which even in that day did not need definition for any one capable of reading Shakespeare. Many of the others were explained wrongly. There were some which appear to be the compiler's personal contribution to the vocabulary of archaic English speech.

Furthermore, in order to appreciate the difficulties which Theobald was called upon to meet, in the mere establishment of the text, we must bear in mind how little was then really known of its sources. All the principal authorities are now accessible to the humblest student, if not in their original form, in reproductions which for the purposes of investigation are full as satisfactory. But, like the literature of the same period, they were then so far from being at the command of everybody they were sometimes not even known to anybody. Nor, when known, had their value been subjected to any severe scrutiny and exactly determined. There were a number of questions of importance which presented themselves to any investigator. What was the relation between the quartos and the folios? Could those of the former class, which were printed before Shakespeare's death, be regarded in any instance as having had his sanction? In the case of any given play, which one of the early editions could be deemed the best authority for the text? What was the comparative value of the several folios? None of these questions had there been any attempt to answer. About some of them wrong beliefs were pretty surely entertained by many if not by most. When Theobald published his 'Shakespeare Restored' he not only had no copy of the first folio, but he accepted the general opinion of his time that

the second one was the more valuable. He specifically spoke of it as being on the whole esteemed "as the best impression of Shakespeare."[1] He had not then seen the first folio. When he did, it was to him clearly a revelation. From it he restored numerous readings which in all the later editions had become depraved. Yet it is perhaps doubtful if even he, while recognizing its great importance, recognized its supreme importance. Certainly he left several of its readings to be gleaned and inserted into the received text by later editors.

Furthermore, the modern student of Shakespeare enters into the possession of a vast inheritance of knowledge which has been accumulated by the labor and research of scholars for two centuries and a half. The hundreds of years of discussion carried on, not only in our own but in other tongues, have left for consideration few difficulties which have not been looked at from every point of view. Learning of all sorts has been brought to bear upon the clearing up of every obscure allusion. Scarcely a work in ancient or modern literature capable of throwing light upon the text has been overlooked. Popular beliefs, once widely held but long buried in forgetfulness, have been exhumed to explain passages not otherwise comprehensible. The customs of different periods have been studied to justify the ancient reading. The mere revolution of fashion has of itself made things now plain that were once full of mystery. Take as an illustration the practice of having shoes made to fit specifically each one of the two feet. It was known in Shakespeare's time; it is known in our time;

[1] Shakespeare Restored, p. 70.

it was not known in the eighteenth century. In consequence, Theobald was perplexed by the following passage in King John:

> "Standing on slippers, which his nimble haste
> Had falsely thrust upon contrary feet." [1]

"I could easily account for this in a Greek author," he wrote to Warburton, "but do not know of anything of a modern fashion with us of having shoes or slippers particular for one foot and not the other." [2] But though the statement disturbed his mind, his evident suspicion that ancient slippers might be different from modern ones kept him from disturbing the text. He accordingly left the passage without change or comment. Not so Dr. Johnson. He chose to impute his own ignorance to his author's carelessness. "Shakespeare," he sagely wrote, "seems to have confounded the man's shoes with his gloves. He that is frighted or hurried may put his hand into the wrong glove, but either shoe will admit either foot. The author seems to be disturbed by the disorder he describes." [3] This note continued unchallenged in the Johnson and Steevens' edition of 1773. It was not till the edition of 1778 that it dawned upon the minds of these two scholars, through the agency of Farmer, that the ancient practice might be different from the modern.

Compare now the position of the modern editor, guarded on every side from error, with that of Theobald. Here was a man who for the most he accomplished had

[1] Act iv., scene 2.

[2] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 392.

[3] Johnson's Shakespeare, vol. iii. p. 475.

to rely upon his own reading and study. From the unsatisfactory works of reference then existing he could derive hardly any help in explaining allusions to things and persons, or in deciphering the meaning of obsolete words, or in saving himself from the greater peril which waits upon lack of acquaintance with the obsolete meaning of words in common use. That he sometimes failed was inevitable. In the obloquy which Pope succeeded in fastening upon his name and memory, men were found eager to pounce upon his most trivial mistakes while passing over in silence the grossest blunders of his predecessor. Theobald, for illustration, was ignorant of the fact that *depart* once had as one of its significations the sense of 'part,' 'separate.' Accordingly in 'Timon of Athens' he changed the word into 'do part.' "Common sense," he said, "favors my emendation." The possession of that specific information arising from the general advance of knowledge, which so many confound with the possession of special acumen on their own part, gave here an opportunity for a sneer which Steevens did not fail to improve. "Common sense," he remarked, "may favor it, but an acquaintance with the language of Shakespeare's time would not have been quite so propitious." So it would have been equally unpropitious to several of the definitions which Steevens himself, with far greater opportunities, was later to make.

And yet, with the lack of all the aids which abound for the modern scholar, Theobald's great learning and extensive reading in all sorts of subjects enabled him to clear up more obscure allusions of importance than it has fallen to the lot of any single scholar to succeed in

doing. This was partly owing to the fact that he was the first in the field. But he would not have been in the field at all, had he not at that early day been in the possession of an amount of learning which has never received its full recognition. It extended to all departments which could illustrate the text: history ancient and modern, natural history, fiction, poetry, classic literature, the little known literature of the Elizabethan age, the less known literature of the age preceding. Let us consider some of the more conspicuous of the obscure passages whose meaning he was the first to reveal. As a starting-point take the light he was enabled to throw upon certain difficult places in consequence of his intimate acquaintance with the inferior drama of the Elizabethan period, which apparently no one but he had then read.

In 'The Taming of the Shrew' he succeeded in uncanonizing a saint who had had possession of the text in all complete editions from the first folio inclusive. In the Induction to the play Sly had been represented as saying to the hostess,

> "Go by S. Jeronimie; go to thy cold bed and warm thee."

Theobald pointed out that this was but one of numerous references found in the plays of that time to an expression found in 'The Spanish Tragedy,' the second part of 'Jeronimo.' On account of the popularity of the piece and perhaps in consequence of some peculiarity in the acting, the phrase 'go by' had come to be one of the stock quotations of the dramatists of that day. Theobald therefore conformed to the quarto of 1631 by

omitting the saintship.[1] Again, in 'King John' he cleared up the difficulty that perplexed the passage in which Falconbridge retorts to his mother, who had called him "most untoward knave," with the words,

"Knight, knight, good mother, Basilisco-like."[2]

This line, obscure in itself, had been made obscurer in nearly all the editions preceding by being connected directly with the line following. The meaning Theobald rendered perfectly plain by citing the passage in the old play of 'Soliman and Perseda' in which one of the characters, Basilisco, insists on being called knight instead of knave. Further he pointed out that the "hollow pampered jades of Asia" in Pistol's speech[3] was a parody on a passage in the second part of 'Tamburlaine.' In that play the conqueror is represented as being drawn in his chariot by two kings with bits in their mouths, while in his left hand he holds the reins and with his right scourges the monarchs with his whip. Such a scene must in its actual representation always have produced a sensation. Whatever was the impression it made upon the ruder part of the audience, it excited powerfully the risibles of contemporary dramatists, who were never tired of lugging in allusions to it.

Take again the earlier literature preceding the Elizabethan. Theobald was seemingly the only scholar of the time who was acquainted with the mediæval story of Troy. This knowledge enabled him to explain as well as rectify numerous passages, especially those in

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. ii. p. 271.

[2] Act i., scene 1.

[3] King Henry IV., Act ii., scene 4.

'Troilus and Cressida.' The reward he received from certain of his contemporaries was ridicule of the "low industry" which had made the text intelligible. He pointed out further that the clown's statement in 'Twelfth Night' that "Cressida was a beggar" was borrowed from 'The Testament of Criseide.'[1] This had been long included in the editions of Chaucer's works, though now known to have been the composition of the Scotch poet, Henryson. Ignorant he was of Lodge's 'Rosalynde'; but he recognized and announced the resemblance between certain of the characters and incidents in 'As You Like It' and the tale of 'Gamelyn.'[2] This latter had appeared but a short time before, in Urry's edition of Chaucer. He found that the song sung by the grave-digger in 'Hamlet' was taken from 'Tottel's Miscellany' published in 1557. Naturally, though wrongly, he ascribed it to the Earl of Surrey,[3] because he appeared on the title-page of that collection as the main author. Coming to later works, the credit of discovering that the names of the devils mentioned in 'Lear' were taken from Dr. Harsnett's 'Declaration of Popish Impostures' must be awarded to Theobald, though it is to Warburton seemingly that he owed the opportunity to examine the treatise.[4] Furthermore, the remark of the clown in 'As You Like It'—"we quarrel in print by the book"—led him to point out that the gallants of Queen Elizabeth's time studied the art of fencing and the grounds of quarrelling from three works which he mentions, one of which was Vincentio Saviola's

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. ii. p. 498. [2] Ibid. p. 187.
[3] Ibid. vol. vii. p. 346. [4] Nichols, vol. ii. pages 209, 230, 490.

'Practice of the Rapier and Dagger.'[1] Warburton was later to exploit after his fashion the knowledge gained from this treatise, and along with it to assume by implication the credit of having been the first to reveal its existence.

Let us turn to other fields. Theobald's acquaintance with historical authorities not generally known enabled him to show that the remote original of the story of 'Hamlet' was to be found in the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus.[2] So again a similar familiarity with the European situation during the reign of Elizabeth put him on the track of rectifying a reading in 'The Comedy of Errors' and explaining an allusion. In that play Dromio of Syracuse professes himself able to find countries in his unknown brother's wife whom he describes as being "spherical like a globe." In reply to an inquiry he had been generally represented as saying that France was "in her forehead; armed and reverted, making war against her hair." So the final word had appeared in all editions after the first. Theobald recognized at once the allusion, and the further fact that there had been a designed quibble. The extreme Catholic party in France was waging war against Henry of Navarre, the legitimate successor to the throne. So he properly threw out *hair* and substituted the *heir* of the first folio.[3] Finally, the allusion in 'Twelfth Night' to the Egyptian thief who kills the one he loves was shown by him to have been taken from the *Æthiopica* of the Greek romance-writer, Heliodorus.[4]

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. ii. p. 264.
[2] Ibid. vol. vii. p. 226.
[3] Ibid. vol. iii. p. 32.
[4] Ibid. vol. ii. p. 528.

These are some — by no means all — of the contributions to the comprehension of Shakespeare's writings made by a single man at the very dawn of Shakespeare study. The range of reading involved in these several discoveries speaks for itself. To us the facts disclosed partake no longer of the nature of discoveries; they have become property as common as the air. They are assumed to be known by every special student of Shakespeare. But in Theobald's time they were not known to anybody. Our present familiarity with them has led us in consequence to forget the person and the agency that was the first to bring them to light. Not that it is meant to imply that Theobald did not leave plenty of problems for later editors to solve. There were numerous gaps in his knowledge, great as that knowledge assuredly was. He may have been unaware, at the outset, of the very existence of Marlowe, though he was certainly familiar with some of his works. He followed the volume of 1640 in giving to Shakespeare the credit of the authorship of the famous poem entitled 'The Passionate Shepherd to his Love.'[1] At least this was true at the time his first edition appeared; it is noticeable that the note to that effect was dropped from his second edition. Hence he failed to understand the allusion in 'As You Like It' to the "dead shepherd," and the saw with which he is there credited.[2] But if he was ignorant of this latter, so were his successors, including Steevens and Malone, until Capell furnished them the means of enlightenment.

A similar story can be told of 'The Taming of the

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i. p. 261.

[2] Act ~~iv.~~ III., scene ~~i.~~ 5.

Shrew.' Theobald was familiar with everything that Chaucer wrote. It was something that could be said of very few men at that day; indeed it cannot be said of too many at the present day. He was equally familiar with the mass of matter gathered from every quarter which then went under the name of that author. He was also acquainted with portions of Lydgate. But of Gower he pretty certainly knew little and perhaps nothing. In consequence he was utterly at a loss when he came to the line, in 'The Taming of the Shrew,' —

"Be she as foul as was Florentius' love,"[1] —

of the passage in which Petruchio expresses his willingness to marry any one provided that she had sufficient dowry. "I confess," he wrote to Warburton, "this is a piece of secret history that I am wholly unacquainted with."[2] He got no help from that quarter. Accordingly in his edition he let it pass without remark. What was rare with him, he did not even confess his own ignorance. Warburton later failed to imitate his reticence; but as usual made up for lack of knowledge by excess of conjecture. "This I suppose," he remarked, "relates to a circumstance in some Italian novel, and should be read Florentio's."[3]

Another incident discloses in a striking manner the character and the characteristics of the two men. Theobald wrote to his friend about "Bargulus, the strong Illyrian pirate," mentioned in the second part of 'Henry VI.'[4] The old quarto, he further said, has

[1] Act i., scene 2.
[2] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 334.
[3] Warburton's Shakespeare, vol. ii. p. 410.
[4] Act iv., scene 1.

"mighty Abradas, the great Macedonian pirate."[1] Who these personages were he did not know, nor could he learn. "Neither of these wights," he remarked in his edition, "have I been able to trace, or discover from what legend our author derived his acquaintance with them."[2] Warburton, at the time Theobald applied to him, was in the same state of ignorance. But during the fifteen years that went by before he brought out his own edition he had lighted upon the fact that Bargulus had been casually mentioned in Cicero's treatise *De Officiis*. Accordingly he proceeded to misquote Theobald's note, to sneer at his use of the word 'legend,' and to express himself as somewhat shocked by his predecessor's lack of familiarity with Bargulus. "And yet he is to be met with in Tully's Offices," he said condescendingly.[3] For a reason sufficiently obvious, however, he was careful to refrain from saying anything whatever about Abradas. So for the sake of concealing his want of knowledge he garbled the quotation he took from the man to whom he had been vaunting his superiority. "Neither of these wights" had been Theobald's words; they were carefully changed into "this wight." No one who makes a study of Shakespearean controversy during the eighteenth century can fail to see how apt a student Warburton became in the practice of misrepresentation and calumny which distinguished the school of Pope. His habit of self-glorification, however, even at the expense of truth, he did not have to acquire.

But it was something more than mere erudition that

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 440. [2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iv. p. 266.
[3] Warburton's Shakespeare, vol. v. p. 23.

Theobald possessed. Examples of the acumen he showed in felicitous emendation, now accepted of all, have been furnished in abundance; and the supply has been far from being exhausted. But equally was his sanity of judgment exhibited in the adoption of readings to which, though he was not the first to originate, he was the first to give authority and currency. It was Theobald who changed for us all *cannon* into *canon* in the passage in which, as it now reads, Hamlet grieves that the Almighty had fixed his canon against self-slaughter.[1] The early quartos and the folios, the editions of Rowe and Pope had coincided in using the form *cannon*. This was then an occasional variant spelling of *canon*. But with the disappearance of the knowledge of this fact, what was easily understood in the early part of the seventeenth century had been forgotten in the early part of the eighteenth. The form *cannon* had then become restricted to designating a piece of ordnance. To it naturally the interpretation was accommodated. No one now ventures to follow the original reading. Yet it is a singular fact that there are men in modern times who have been disposed to view the alteration with suspicion, in spite of the fact that Theobald fortified it by the parallel passage in 'Cymbeline'[2] which speaks of the divine prohibition against self-slaughter.[3] He mentioned further that his reading had been adopted by "the accurate Mr. Hughes" in his edition, — an edition which generations of bibliographers have sought for long and have not as yet found.

[1] Act i., scene 2.

[2] Act iii., scene 4.

[3] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iii. p. 236.

It was this same sanity of judgment which kept Theobald from being led astray in numerous instances — though he was in far too many — by the regard and admiration he entertained for Warburton. It frequently enabled him to maintain the integrity of the original text against the vagaries of his then professed friend. Theobald himself was too much under the influence of the desire to make the words of his author conform to fact. But he had penetration enough to perceive that Shakespeare's object was to picture the truth of life, and that for the sake of so doing he was indifferent to truths which appeal only to the lower understanding. Hence he resisted the efforts of specious accuracy which refused allegiance to the authority of the poet's sources in order to make his statements conform to the results of either general knowledge or specific investigation. 'The Winter's Tale,' in particular, belongs to an intellectual region with which the laws of time and place and the sequence of historical events have nothing whatever to do. Yet agonizing efforts began to be put forth early to make the incidents of that drama conform to the knowledge with which we are all presumably familiar.

The play was early well known to have been founded upon the tale of 'Dorastus and Faunia.' A statement to that effect was made by Langbaine, Rowe, and Gildon. The last-named had apparently never seen "the old story-book," as he called it. He justly inferred, however, that from it had been copied the conversion of Bohemia into a maritime country. Its author, Greene, surpassed indeed all his contemporaries in the utter indifference he manifested to known fact or accredited

legend. In one of his tales he represented Saragossa as the chief city of Sicilia; and a little later in the same piece he spoke of Admetus dying for her husband Alcest. In disregard of historic truth or received fable the student of the Stratford High School could not enter into competition with the Master of Arts of Cambridge University. It brought no qualms to such a man as Greene to put Delphos upon an island, as he did in the story upon which 'The Winter's Tale' was founded. Theobald, who was familiar with the original, naturally conformed to it because Shakespeare had done so before him. Warburton was anxious to substitute "fertile the soil" for "fertile the isle," as it appears in the play. His friend, however, refused to make the required subservience to geographical accuracy, though he was obliging enough to term the proposed change "a very reasonable conjecture."[1]

Furthermore, the astuteness which Theobald manifested in the explanation of obscure passages places him in that particular on an intellectual level much higher than Pope's. In the treatment of difficulties which concern not so much the text as the idea, the position of the two men was often completely reversed. The one was a commentator, the other a poet; but the conception of the meaning by the latter was frequently as prosaic as the similar conception by the former was poetical. So much acuteness did Theobald at times display in arriving at the sense of doubtful utterances that it must always be a matter of regret that he generally limited his explanations of meaning to the places which he had either

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iii. p. 98.

amended himself or to those in which he controverted the explanations of others. The penetration he showed in these instances makes clear how great an advance would have been early given to the comprehension of Shakespeare, had he been encouraged to set forth the signification of all passages which present difficulty. One example, chosen out of many, will be sufficient to indicate the superiority of Theobald to Pope in the perception of meaning and to illustrate the injustice still prevalent, which gives to others the credit to which he is entitled. It is taken from the second part of 'King Henry IV.,'[1] in which the new monarch is represented as saying to his brothers,

> "My father is gone wild into his grave,
> For in his tomb lie my affections."

The passage is not obviously clear. The word *wild* presents peculiar difficulty. Pope got over or fancied he got over it by substituting for it *wailed*. Theobald himself stumbled at the line when it first engaged his attention.[2] Pope's alteration was tame, to be sure; but if it did not furnish poetry, it looked as if it might furnish sense. He was impressed, however, by a marginal note of Thirlby's on the passage which he had seen. That controversialist remarked in his usual vigorous way that the reading *wailed* was a ridiculous one; that it was not only nonsense in itself, but the cause of nonsense in the following verses. This view made Theobald pause. By the time his edition appeared he had come to understand the exact meaning. He saw in conse-

[1] Act v., scene 2.

[2] Nichols, ii. 420.

quence that the alteration effected by Pope not only made the line commonplace, but that it was as little supported by reason as it was by authority. Then he gave his own view of its signification which he reinforced by passages which established the certainty of it beyond question. "My father," says the new king, "is gone wild into his grave, for now all my wild affections lie entombed with him."[1] So Theobald explained it; so did Malone more than half a century later; so all the world now explains it; but modern editions give usually the credit of the explanation to the later editor who constantly depreciated the earlier editor he plundered.

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. iii. p. 530.

CHAPTER XXIV

DEFECTS OF THEOBALD'S EDITION

No one can rise from a thorough study of the work which Theobald accomplished without coming to entertain a high opinion of the sanity of his views, of the extent of his acquirements, of the acumen he displayed in ascertaining the meaning of doubtful passages, above all of the skill he showed in the emendation of phrases and sentences to all appearance hopelessly corrupt. It has been necessary to lay special stress upon his abilities and achievements on account of the persistent detraction which for a century and a half has waited upon what he was and what he did. But there is no intention of seeking to convey the impression that he was a perfect editor any more than that he was a perfect man. To be free from falling into a certain class of errors was impossible for any one living at the time he did. But there were errors he committed, due not to the age in which he flourished, but exclusively to himself. Nor, furthermore, was his conduct always discreet; and in some cases it was distinctly unfair. No impartial account can be given of the controversy in which he was concerned that does not take note of the particulars wherein he failed as well as of those wherein he succeeded.

At the outset it is worth while to designate one pecu-

liarity of his edition which is annoying to the reader rather than prejudicial to the actual value of the work. Pope had followed in general the practice of reckoning it a new scene whenever a new character came on the stage, though the place continued unchanged. As an illustration the first scene in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' as found in the folios, in Rowe, and in modern editions, appears in his as divided into five. Theobald did not imitate him in this particular. His scenes corresponded with the actual change of place or of situation. But for some unexplained and unexplainable reason he did not number them. This method of proceeding does not affect either the excellence or the integrity of the text. Upon him seeking to consult it, however, it puts an unnecessarily irritating burden. With as much reason he might have refrained from numbering the pages of his volumes.

Another peculiarity of Theobald's edition there was to which exception can be justly taken. This was the tendency he occasionally exhibited to display his erudition. By this is not meant his habit of pointing out parallel passages in Greek and Roman authors conveying the same idea as that expressed in the text. With comparisons of this sort his edition was liberally sprinkled. There was always in Theobald's mind that lurking desire which besets the hearts of the scholarly to prove Shakespeare's intimate familiarity with the classic writers. With these he was himself exceptionally familiar. Any passage in any of them which contained a thought not essentially different from that found in his own author was fairly sure to find a place in his notes. He did not

usually — though he did sometimes — venture to draw any positive inferences from these parallelisms as to the extent of Shakespeare's reading. For that he was too wary. Even if in his heart he believed that the sentiment had been borrowed, he did not so state it; he left it to suggest itself. No fault can be reasonably found with his course in calling attention to these resemblances; there are many by whom it will be distinctly approved. What was objectionable was the occasional dragging in of learned linguistic disquisitions utterly foreign to the matter in hand.

The most glaring, though far from the only illustration of this particular defect can be found in a note, otherwise of special merit, to the first scene of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor.' Theobald was the one who gave us the word *latten* in the demand for a duel made by Pistol. "I combat challenge of this Latin(e) Bilbo," he had been represented as saying in the editions from the first folio inclusive. Theobald's substitution of *latten* for *Latin* had the effect of transferring the challenge from the pedantic schoolmaster, Sir Hugh Evans, to the lank and meager Slender. The emendation, though escaping the previous editors, had only to be given to meet with universal acceptance. It is, in fact, one of Theobald's corrections seemingly so inevitable after they have once been made that men soon lose sight of the fact that there ever could have been any other reading or interpretation. Warburton in his edition pretended to take the alteration from the earliest quarto copies of the play, where the word appears as *laten;* but the source from which he actually took it is indicated by his adopting the erron-

eous statement of the man whose name he forgot to mention, that in these the word was spelled *latten*. Theobald was not content with explaining the term as designating a thin piece of metal and thereby establishing the justice of his interpretation. He proceeded to lug in a long, technical and utterly inappropriate disquisition for the sake of correcting a passage in Hesychius in which 'orichalc' had been mentioned.[1]

Moreover, while errors of fact are infrequent, they nevertheless occur. They are usually, perhaps invariably, due to inadvertence or oversight. For this oversight the only excuse which can be pleaded is the almost inevitable tendency to blunder which at times besets the most careful of us all when dealing with a multiplicity of details. Theobald informs us, for instance, that the *Menœchmi* of Plautus appeared in an English translation as early as 1515.[2] This might have been regarded as a typographical error, had he not cut off that explanation by making the further assertion that it was published half a century before Shakespeare was born. The blunder is the more inexcusable because Langbaine, to whom he referred, had given the true date of 1595.[3] Nor was Theobald entirely free from the besetting sin of his admired friend Warburton, of making up for barrenness of knowledge by fertility of conjecture. Sometimes too it was very poor conjecture. Take the passage in 'Othello'[4] in which Iago comments upon Roderigo in the following manner:

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i. p. 228.
[2] Ibid. vol. iii. p. 4.
[3] Langbaine's 'English Dramatic Poets, ed. of 1691, p. 455.
[4] Act v., scene 1.

"I have rubbed this young quat almost to the sense,
And he grows angry."

Quat is a word belonging to the dialect of Warwickshire and its adjacent counties. It still retains there the signification it has here, of 'pimple,' 'small boil' or 'blister.' It is a word which Shakespeare must often have heard in his youth. He naturally put it in the mouth of one of his characters. Though used to some extent by other writers of the time, it could hardly have been known to most of his London contemporaries. It puzzled thoroughly the early editors and was first explained properly in a magazine contribution belonging to 1748. Rowe retained it, but made no attempt to define it. Pope adopted *gnat*, which is the reading of the Othello quarto of 1622. Theobald confessed his absolute ignorance of the word as found in the first folio, while he rejected the absurd one his predecessor had introduced in its place into the text. But instead of sticking to the only really authorized form and confessing his ignorance of its meaning, he substituted for it a word of his own which differed only from that of Pope's edition in being a little less absurd. For *quat* he read *knot*, the name of a small bird. Other commentators were likewise inclined to refer it to the animal creation. Hanmer read *quab*, which he said meant a 'gudgeon.' Upton preferred *quail*. The right reading was restored to the text by Johnson, with the correct explanation.[1]

[1] The explanation of the meaning of the word first appeared in a communication to the 'British Magazine,' p. 425 of the volume for 1748. It was signed Shakespearianus, and dated Leicester, August, 1748. "*Quat*," said the writer, "is a *provincial word*, vulgarly used, and well understood, in the parts of Warwickshire near Stratford upon Avon (Shakespear's birth-

In determining the meaning it was not often that Theobald's sagacity was at fault. In this respect it was as a rule exceptionally acute. Yet there are occasions in which he balked at the sense of passages which present no particular difficulty. In 'Antony and Cleopatra,'[1] for example, Enobarbus is represented as beginning to hesitate about maintaining loyalty to a chief who recklessly flings away all chances of success, and is consequently sure to involve his followers in his own ruin. The reflections passing through his mind open with these words:

> "Mine honesty and I begin to square;
> The loyalty, well held to fools, does make
> Our faith mere folly."

Theobald thought both the text and the pointing depraved. To remedy this condition of things he changed *The* into *Tho'*, and by placing a comma after *held* gave the idea that loyalty seems mere folly to fools.[2] But a far more inexplicable slip was his misconception of the words of Horatio to the English ambassadors at the conclusion of Hamlet. He supposed the pronoun *he* of the line —

> "He never gave commandment for their death" —

to refer to the dead prince, and not to the dead king. It required the purest perversity of misapprehension to

place) signifying a *pimple*, or *boile*, which being apt to itch much, consequently provokes a good deal of scratching, or *rubbing*, and being *rubb'd*, grows hot, *painful*, and red, which is called in the same country dialect *angry*." It is from this communication that Johnson probably got his definition.

[1] Act. iii., scene 13.

[2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. vi. p. 284.

so attribute it. What was even worse, he was disposed to make his own misunderstanding the fault of the poet. He suggested as a possible explanation that Shakespeare may have forgot himself "with regard to the circumstance of Rosincrantz and Guildenstern's death."[1]

There were, further, times when Theobald took unjustifiable liberties with the text. In some instances this was due to ignorance. Thus in 'The Merchant of Venice' he made the unnecessary change into *thill-horse* of *fill-horse* — in the original authority *philhorse*. But while, like Pope, he substituted words and forms of his own for those contained in the early editions, unlike Pope, it was very seldom the case that he did so without notification to the reader. His substitutions were not many when he acted on his own independent judgment; but even then they were too many. In the two instances, for example, in which *stithy* appears in Shakespeare, once as a noun and once as a verb, he indulged his private fancy in changing it both times to *smithy*. But there was a much more unjustifiable alteration. Polonius, who with his various other qualities was something of a verbal critic, objected to Hamlet's addressing his daughter as "the beautified Ophelia." In so doing he was clearly giving utterance to some contemporary censure. Whether his dislike to the epithet applied to her was due to his dislike of the method by which the word had been formed, or to his dislike of the meaning given to it, most readers of the present day will agree with him that *beautified*, so used, is "an ill phrase, a vile phrase." But vile as it is, few will be

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. vii. p. 366.

found who would not prefer it to *beatified*, which Theobald, against the authority of all the early copies, put in its place.

Furthermore, Theobald occasionally went to the length of adding words or substituting some other allied word, for the sake of curing, as he said, the lameness of the verse or of making the line flowing and perfect. Thus in 'Much Ado about Nothing'[1] he substituted *approof* for *proof* in the line,

"Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof."

Still, Theobald's offences against the authority of the original sources are comparatively few when he exercised his own unfettered judgment. It is from the deference he paid to the judgment of others that his edition received its greatest blemishes. This was particularly true of the influence exerted over it by two men, one his violent enemy and the other his professed friend. The most serious injury that befell his text was due to Warburton's fellowship in the undertaking, so far as that fellowship went. Undoubtedly Theobald received help, in a few instances important help, from his ally's extensive reading and out-of-the-way though inaccurate learning. But in general the harm was out of all proportion to the benefit. His text was liable at any time to suffer from the submission of his own judgment to the vagaries of a man who was little content to be satisfied with the obvious sense of a passage, but constantly preferred to read into Shakespeare meanings which Shakespeare had never dreamed of and would not have been Shakespeare if he had.

[1] Act iv., scene 1.

There is no question indeed that Theobald's connection with Warburton was one of the gravest of the many misfortunes which befell his life. It will affect his reputation permanently. This is not because of the latter's appropriating to himself the credit of emendations made by the former. Shakespearean investigation will in process of time restore to their rightful owner all of these, as it has even now restored the majority. Nor is it because of the detraction which Warburton heaped upon his old correspondent after death had made it impossible to defend himself. Doubtless Theobald's reputation has suffered to some extent from both these causes. Still, it could have survived the calumnies and misrepresentations of his sometime friend; what it can never do is to free itself entirely from the harm wrought by his help. Theobald adopted into his text a large number — about a dozen over one hundred of Warburton's emendations. A very few are excellent; the large majority are worse than worthless. They have damaged irretrievably his text, so far as they go. Furthermore he allowed his ally to cumber the pages of the edition with annotations and reflections which in many cases are distinctly impertinent in both the etymological and the common sense of that word. Even when they are not bad in themselves, they are usually felt to be obtrusive. But some of them are so far-fetched and absurd that they find no more than scanty recognition in the most hospitable of variorums which make it their aim to preserve the folly as well as the wisdom of commentators. These excrescences which deformed his work wrought both him and it a double injury. In time there came to be a complete reversal of

the actual situation. What was good in Theobald's edition, due to his own labors, was passed over to the credit of Warburton. What was bad in it, often a consequence of the contributions Warburton made to it, was ascribed to Theobald. This absolutely senseless estimate of the value of the respective shares of the two men in the undertaking is found flourishing in fullest vigor during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Dr. Johnson said many wise and many foolish things about Shakespeare and his commentators. But never did he make a remark more preposterously absurd than the one contained in his life of Pope that the best notes in Theobald's edition were supplied by Warburton.

This is what friendship did for him. Enmity, on the other hand, did not bring any corresponding benefit. His text has suffered not so much from the hostility he felt towards his great detractor as from the respect he paid to his readings. In his own age indeed this did not affect his reputation, but it has distinctly impaired it during later periods. If Theobald exposed unrelentingly Pope's sophistication of the text where the sense was concerned, he kept silence about his more numerous sophistications of the meter. Such a course was at that time politic. So general was the deference then paid to the poet as the greatest master of harmonious versification that England had ever known, that any criticism of his action in this particular would have reacted unfavorably upon the critic. But it is manifest that it was from no motives of policy that Theobald refrained from making much adverse comment upon the emendations of this sort effected by his great contemporary. He himself

sincerely shared in the belief of his age in the latter's unassailable supremacy as a master of verse, and in the propriety of applying his superior skill to the rectification of Shakespeare's text. He therefore not only approved of the alterations made, he adopted them. He did not indeed accept all his predecessor's metrical readings. His far wider knowledge enabled him to show in several instances that Pope had made changes in Shakespeare's versification because he was unfamiliar with the pronunciation of Shakespeare's period. Theobald pointed out, for instance, that *hour* and *soul* and *fire*, which we regard as monosyllables, were in the Elizabethan age often treated as dissyllables. So again he pointed out that words now of three syllables were, or at least could be, sounded then as if consisting of four. At times he took extremer ground. He protested against what he called "this modern unreasonable chasteness of metre," which had led Rowe and Pope to omit words in order that the line might run more smoothly. This, he asserted, was advancing a false nicety of ear not only against the license of Shakespeare's numbers, but against the license of all English versification in common with that of other languages.[1]

But Theobald's occasional principles were distinctly better than his regular practice. It was not often the case that he took exception to Pope's alterations in the supposed interests of the meter. He found fault indeed at times with his predecessors for their failure to correct the lameness of certain lines. When this happened as a result of their neglect to introduce some better reading

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. v. p. 57.

from the original authorities, there was then, but usually only then, justification for his censure. Occasionally he himself did not hesitate to follow the license which prevailed in the eighteenth century in the editing of English classics. The language of an author was to undergo what was then called improvement. His grammar was to be refashioned in order to make it conform to the latest canons of verbal criticism. Sharing to no slight extent in such feelings, it was almost inevitable that Theobald should adopt numerous changes made by his predecessor. A general statement to this effect has appeared in a previous chapter. It is not, however, until we take specific note of the whole number of details in any given instance that we can appreciate the gravity of his obligations, especially in the matter of versification. Their nature and extent will be brought out sharply by selecting one of the plays and observing the changes from the original which were silently introduced into its text by Pope and as silently accepted by Theobald.

Attention has been called earlier to the vast number of these changes. In the particular drama selected for consideration — 'Measure for Measure' — Pope introduced about one hundred and sixty alterations, including in the number the very pettiest as well as the important. The action in this instance was typical; the results reached by the examination of any one play seem not to differ essentially from those which follow the examination of any other. This fact disposes effectually of the assertion that his work upon Shakespeare was purely perfunctory. The largeness of the number of his emendations was enough to furnish a superficially plausible

pretext for Malone's ridiculously extravagant assertion that Pope's "fanciful alterations" were so many that if Shakespeare had returned to earth he would not have understood what he himself had said.[1] The observation is absurd because the changes made are usually of slight consequence and very rarely do they interfere with the comprehension of the meaning. It is possible, indeed, that in some cases they might have met Shakespeare's own approval. Take, as an illustration, one of the most extreme of his emendations of the measure. In a speech of Isabella to the Duke she is represented as giving him an account of her agreement with Angelo in these two lines, which in the original text appear as follows:

> "There have I made my promise, upon the
> Heavy middle of the night, to call upon him."

It was in this way these lines read in Pope's edition:

> "There on the heavy middle of the night
> Have I my promise made to call upon him."

In a similar way a slight transposition of words suffices to change a somewhat rough verse into one perfectly harmonious. At the close of the play the Duke thus addresses Lucio:

> "Wherein have I so deserved of you?"

Pope imparted smoothness to the line by changing the position of one word without in the slightest degree affecting the meaning. In his edition it read as follows:

> "Wherein have I deservèd so of you?"

[1] Malone's Shakespeare, vol. i. p. lxvi.

Pope's rearrangement of the measure is not unfrequently followed in modern editions as well as by his immediate successors. Among them is included the conversion of passages into verse which had previously been printed as prose, and the similar conversion into prose of what had previously been treated as verse. This class of his emendations need not be considered in the statistical tables which set out to show Theobald's indebtedness to his predecessor. The alterations affecting the meter consisted mainly of the four following kinds. There was first the addition of a word or of words to the line; secondly, the omission of a word or of words from the line; thirdly, the transposition of words in the line; and fourthly, the contraction of two words or syllables into one, or a corresponding expansion. Besides these there is a further class of more serious alterations, — that consisting in the substitution by the editor of some word of his own for the word found in the original. These substitutions indeed were frequently made for the sake of improving the measure; but they were also made for the purpose of correcting errors or assumed errors of grammar or expression, and occasionally with the intent to modify or alter the meaning.

If these classes of alterations are arranged under their various heads, the following tables will show the number belonging to each class, and the extent to which Theobald was influenced in this particular play by his predecessor:

Number of words added by Pope to the text . . .	17
Number of these adopted by Theobald	15

Number of words omitted by Pope from the text . .	50
Number of these omissions adopted by Theobald . .	21
Number of words transposed by Pope.	6
Number of these alterations adopted by Theobald .	4
Number of words or syllables contracted or expanded by Pope	17
Number of these alterations adopted by Theobald .	16
Number of substitutions made by Pope	57
Number of these adopted by Theobald	38

It will be seen that under these five classes are comprehended one hundred and forty-seven emendations made by Pope. Of these Theobald introduced into his text ninety-four and discarded fifty-three. As regards the comparative importance of the alterations accepted or rejected the preponderance of weight is distinctly on the side of the latter. But with all the allowance to be made on this score; with all the consideration that needs to be given to the intrinsic insignificance of most of these changes, the number of instances in which Theobald followed his predecessor must be deemed, from the modern point of view, extraordinarily large; for what is true of this one play would be essentially true of all. Hence the aggregate would amount to a number that taken by itself would have almost the right to be termed startling.

It is indeed needless to say that statistics, here as elsewhere, live up to their usual lying character. No small proportion of the instances in which Theobald adopted Pope's readings were so unimportant that even the extreme particularity with which modern scrupulousness approaches the text would content itself with merely

noting them without regarding them. To substitute the *I 'm* of a previous revision for *I am*, or an *I have* for *I 've*, must be looked upon as reducing plagiarism as an offence to its lowest possible terms. But throwing out of view the numerous changes of this character, there still remain too many places where Theobald followed Pope in more violent alterations. For it his reputation has justly suffered in later times. These changes were further introduced into his text without the slightest reference being made to the source from which they were adopted. Undoubtedly Theobald in so doing was conforming to the general practice of his age. The course he took had been the course followed by his predecessor. It was the one continued by his immediate successor, not to say successors. It was not at first the custom of any editor to acknowledge his obligations to preceding editors. He entered into their labors, he accepted whatever of their alterations suited him, he rejected what displeased him, but he rarely thought it worth while to give them credit for emendations they had been the first to make or to suggest, or even to mention their names. There was indeed a disposition to treat the text of every preceding edition as being of about the same authority as the original, and subject it to the same processes of manipulation and alteration.

It was in this way Pope had treated Rowe. He had to a large extent followed closely the latter's text. The emendations made by his predecessor he inserted into his own edition without giving any indication of the source from which they had been derived. This might be ascribed to indolence as well as to custom. Pope rarely

mentioned the changes which he made himself. It was accordingly too much to count upon that he should mention changes made by somebody else. But while this was a common practice, it was not the sort of practice we should expect to be followed by a scholar like Theobald. He sinned too against what must have been his own clear conviction of right; for, save in the case of Pope, no one could have been more scrupulous than he in the acknowledgment of obligation. Furthermore, his course was all the more objectionable because he occupied the position of a professed critic of his rival. If Pope adopted without mention of the fact his predecessor's readings, he made no attack upon him. He refrained from calling attention to his ignorance or his errors. In his case, to be sure, there had been no provocation. It was different with Theobald. He was, therefore, perfectly justifiable in exposing the incompetence of the man who had pursued him with unrelenting virulence. But so long as he undertook to establish beyond controversy the commission of blunders by Pope he was morally bound to exhibit any special instance, or at least the collective number of instances, in which he had been indebted to the man whose blunders he had been constantly engaged in pointing out. This he failed to do save on the pettiest scale.

Herein Theobald's course deserves a severity of censure which, singularly enough, it has never received in the slightest degree. It is significant of the feelings and attitude of his age that no complaint was ever lodged against him on this particular score. Pope could not have failed to observe the use which had been made

of his own labors; but in all the attacks he directed or inspired against his rival editor, whether in prose or verse, there was never so much as an allusion to a proceeding which in our time would occupy the most conspicuous place in the controversy. Nor did any of his partisans ever make any comment upon the obligations under which Theobald lay to his predecessor. Indeed, Pope himself had been estopped by his own action from attempting any such sort of criticism. In his second edition he had not only introduced a number of Theobald's emendations without acknowledgment, but he had in the same way put forward as his own some of his explanations. In 'Shakespeare Restored,' for illustration, there had been a note on the following passage in 'Hamlet,'[1] in which the queen is represented as addressing her son in these words: —

> "Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
> Starts up and stands an end."

The comparison, "like life in excrements," puzzled later readers. In at least two of the quartos that came out after the Restoration, it was dropped from the text. Theobald pointed out that the expression was based upon the notion that the hair and nails are without life and sensation, and consequently are excrementitious; and that in this instance "fear and surprise had such an effect upon Hamlet that his hairs, as if there were life in those excrements, started up and stood on end."[2] In his second edition Pope calmly appropriated this explanation, almost in its very words, in a note, as if it

[1] Act iii., scene 4.

[2] Shakespeare Restored, p. 48.

came from himself. As Theobald never made any public claim that he had been the first to give the proper interpretation of the passage, commentators from the time of Warburton to this day have regularly assigned it to its borrower and deprived of the credit of it its real discoverer.

But though contemporaries never made it a ground of reproach that Theobald had adopted numbers of Pope's readings without acknowledgment, from the modern standpoint he cannot be deemed blameless. Furthermore, he must be held responsible for introducing the practice, which has since prevailed largely among Shakespeare commentators, of giving no small share of their time and attention to an exposure of the blunders committed by their predecessors. It is the correct thing to find fault with this method of proceeding. We all censure it in theory, however little we carry out our principles in our own practice. There was no one of that early day who criticised previous editors with more freedom than did Dr. Johnson. He rarely neglected an opportunity to say something disparaging of Theobald. He professed and doubtless entertained profound respect for the living dignitary of the church whose edition was the one his own followed. Yet a large number of his notes were devoted to showing how erroneous were the interpretations Warburton gave, and how unjustifiable were the changes he made. But he atoned for the censure found in the body of his work by deploring the practice in his preface. A broader survey of the situation may possibly lead us to take a different view. As Hosea Biglow discovered that civilization

is very apt to get forward on a powder-cart, we may perhaps be permitted to entertain a reasonable assurance that the controversy which has been aroused by hostile criticism, and which has in turn stimulated research, has been distinctly helpful to the progress of Shakespearean investigation.

But whether this view be true or not, Theobald himself has been the greatest sufferer from the practice which he introduced. It was continued in regard to him by men who had not the excuse of his provocation. His readings were largely adopted without acknowledgment, his merits passed over in silence. On the other hand, no occasion was neglected to dwell upon errors which he had committed, or which ignorance supposed him to have committed. Any half-dozen of his best emendations would have made the permanent reputation of men of former as of present times who have chosen to call him dull. But so steady and persistent has been the depreciation which has waited upon his name that even those whose researches have convinced them of the falsity of the statements about his character and achievements have been awed by the chorus of denunciation which has come and still continues to come from the irresponsible and the ignorant. When they venture to speak in terms of approval, what is said is often said half-heartedly and sometimes apologetically.

CHAPTER XXV

THEOBALD'S LATER REPUTATION

THOUGH at the outset Theobald's edition had in its favor the suffrages of all competent to express an opinion, it was soon made manifest that his triumph was to be a barren one. His fate is perhaps the most noteworthy example in our literature of the losing fight which the ordinary writer makes when he comes into conflict with a man of genius who by his possession of genius has acquired exceptional popularity. No matter how just his quarrel, no matter how incontestable his superiority in the points which are the subject of controversy, he is destined to failure. Even were he to achieve temporary success with his own age, posterity would be sure to reverse its verdict. It is the side of the great author it alone heeds, frequently the only side of which it hears.

Theobald himself must have come early to recognize that any partial triumph of his own must be short-lived. Unquestionably he anticipated — as he had a right to anticipate — that the superiority of his edition would be so convincing that hostile criticism would be silenced. "I am so very cool," he wrote to Warburton, "as to my sentiments of my adversary's usage that I think the public should not be too largely troubled with them. *Block-*

headry is the chief hinge of his satire upon me; and if my edition do not wipe out that, I ought to be content to let the charge be fixed; if it do, the reputation gained will be a greater triumph than resentment."[1] From Pope and his adherents he expected no mercy. But powerful as he knew his enemy to be, he had underrated his power. Against the influence of the poet, crushing all opposition, it became increasingly useless to struggle. At this particular period it was assisted by the general ignorance which prevailed as to the character of the work that needed to be done, and of the methods necessary to do it properly. Theobald could not have failed to see during his later life that his repute was largely confined to the comparatively small class that were really familiar with Shakespeare. But it pretty certainly never entered his head that the minds of those possessing such knowledge would come eventually to be influenced unfavorably towards him, by the deference paid to Pope. He never could have dreamed of the obloquy that after his death was to overtake his memory with the very men who were to devote themselves to the same pursuits which he had followed and to build their own reputations upon the foundations which he had been the first to lay.

The hostility of the poet, it is needless to say, was the most effective instrumentality in bringing about this result. But to this ever-working agency were added two contributory ones. These tended distinctly to the undervaluation of Theobald's character and efforts; at least they furnished a pretext for depreciation which

[1] Letter of Nov. 18, 1731, in Nichols, vol. ii. p. 621.

was never neglected. One was the outcome of the natural but unwise course he pursued. Goaded on as he was by persistent attacks, while his own edition was in preparation, he forgot what he had written to Warburton that if the superiority of his work were manifest, it would be to him a greater triumph than any display of resentment shown in exhibiting the blockheadry of his antagonist. Under the circumstances it was doubtless asking too much of human nature to adhere to a resolution so good. "There are provocations," he wrote, "which a man can never quite forget." Unconscious of his own impotence against a literary dominance so overpowering, he announced his intention of assailing his own assailant. "I shall willingly," he said, "devote a part of my life to the honest endeavor of quitting scores; with this exception, however, that I will not return those civilities in his peculiar strain, but confine myself at least to the limits of common decency."[1]

Theobald certainly tried to carry his purposes into effect. He took ample advantage of the numerous opportunities which presented themselves for exposing Pope's shortcomings as an editor and his blunders as a commentator. Much fault was found at the time and later by the partisans of the poet at the way in which he had been treated by his successor in the notes to his edition. It was quite unbecoming in their eyes that Theobald should resent the misrepresentations and calumnies of which he had been made the subject. The thing for him to do was to exhibit the qualities of meekness, long-suffering, and patience which had been con-

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i., Preface, p. xxxvii.

spicuous in the conduct of his assailant only by their absence. There is not the slightest warrant for this view from the side of justice. On that score Pope deserved far worse treatment than he received. The gross personal attacks he made were not returned in kind. "I shall think it ever better," wrote Theobald, "to want wit than to want humanity; and impartial posterity may perhaps be of my opinion." There is a childlike confidence in the fairness of future generations expressed here which was never born of insight. In the controversies in which a great writer becomes engaged, posterity is rarely impartial. His influence is a constant quantity. Furthermore, it not only never ceases to operate on its own account, it is continually drawing to itself the accumulations of favorable opinion which accrue from the additions made by previous generations.

Theobald's course, therefore, though not unjustifiable, was not the less impolitic. No ordinary reputation could indeed have stood the exposure he had made of Pope's indolence and incapacity; but Pope's was far from being an ordinary reputation. The revelation of his errors shook not in the slightest the faith of his adherents; it merely led them to view with dislike or detestation the man who had revealed them. But the indifferent were likewise alienated. Even those who fully recognized Theobald's superiority as an editor could hardly be expected to have sympathy with the constantly recurring comments on Pope's incompetence. Men in general are too fully occupied with the consideration of their own quarrels to care long for the quarrels of others. The best

they can give them is a languid interest. If called upon to do a great deal more, they become disposed to resent the demand upon their attention. There is no question that Theobald's exposure of Pope's general neglect and specific blundering would have been far more effective had he contented himself with quietly pointing out the errors made, without giving expression to any adverse comment upon their maker. As it was, readers came speedily to be bored by the everlasting slaying of the slain. Finally they began to resent it, to take the side of the man who was so persistently assailed. They chose to ignore the provocation which had been given. Theobald's perfectly just and justifiable observations upon the indolence and inefficiency of Pope as an editor were not unfrequently styled illiberal abuse, even by those who acknowledged the abstract correctness of his criticism.

These feelings about Theobald increased in process of time instead of diminishing. It is one of the most noticeable features in the history of Shakespearean scholarship that, while his edition maintained its hold and indeed rose in reputation, his own personal reputation just as steadily fell. Recognition of the superiority of his work was willingly or grudgingly accorded; but it was almost invariably accompanied with the depreciation of the man. It still kept much the lead after the editions of Hanmer and Warburton appeared. Dr. Johnson's did not shake its supremacy in the general estimation. The second edition of 1740 was followed by a third in 1752, and afterward by a number of booksellers' reprints. Down even to the end of the eighteenth century it held its ground. This fact gave great

grief to Malone. Earnest and laborious student of Shakespeare as he was, there was no comparison between him and Theobald as regards mental acumen. There are no small number of the latter's emendations, accepted by him as well as by every one else, which Malone would have been intellectually incapable of making. None the less did he assume the customary attitude of condescending superiority. He admitted that Theobald's edition had been justly preferred to Pope's. Yet the fact that his work should still be considered of any value showed only, he remarked, how long impressions will remain after they are once made. He further assured us that Theobald's knowledge of contemporary authors was so scanty that all the illustrations of the kind dispersed throughout his volumes had been exceeded by the researches which had since been made for elucidating a single play.[1] Malone did not intend to be mendacious; he simply added to the ignorant beliefs he had inherited his own ignorant prejudices.

Still another agency came in to add its injurious effect to the estimation in which Theobald was held. It was due to a characteristic of his that was altogether to his credit. But almost from the outset it was wrested to his discredit. Any one indeed who familiarizes himself with the practice he pursued and the treatment which he received as a consequence of it, will become thoroughly disabused of any belief in the truth of the maxim that honesty is the best policy. It certainly does not apply to Shakespearean investigation. No one was ever more

[1] Malone's Shakespeare, vol. i. p. lxvii (1790).

scrupulous than Theobald in the acknowledgment of obligation. The least particle of service rendered him was sure to meet with ample recognition, unless the conferrer preferred to remain in obscurity. Everything communicated to him received mention, whether it came in the way of direct information or of remote suggestion. Anonymous contributions were recorded. He did not even exercise for himself a right, to which he was fully entitled, of exclusive ownership of emendations which he had himself originated. He was always willing and even eager to share the repute of his own discoveries with his friends and helpers. There is hardly any observation more frequent in his notes than that some particular correction which he had introduced into the text had also occurred independently to some other person. We are fully justified in asserting that he never put forth as entirely his own an alteration or emendation in which any one else had even a remote share. He recorded suggestions which he had lighted upon in quarters inaccessible to anybody but himself, and which, had the fact been left unnoted by him, would have remained unknown to everybody. There was no necessity, save a moral one, to make disclosures of this character. It was a course of conduct which the divines and scholars who followed him and maligned him were particularly careful not to adopt.

And what has been Theobald's reward for this often unnecessary recognition of the pretensions of others? What benefit has he derived from that scrupulous avoidance of arrogating exclusively to himself a single thing to which any person, dead or alive, could lay even the

slightest claim? He has more than paid the full penalty which waits upon such injudicious honesty. If he remarked that some one else had also hit independently upon the particular correction he inserted into the text, credit for it has often been assigned not to him, but to the man who but for him would have remained unknown. The name of the latter was never forgotten in connection with it; whether his own would be even so much as recorded was a matter of chance. Furthermore, from this invariable practice of acknowledging all obligations for whatever had been contributed to the improvement of the text, the view came gradually to prevail that his work derived much of its value, if not its main value, from the aid which he had received. The impression was given that it was to his friends and associates that he was indebted for many, if not most, of his universally accepted emendations. "In what he has done that is conjectural," wrote Capell, "he is rather more happy; but in that he had large assistance." In truth, from the comments which have frequently been made upon him and his work, men would be led to draw the inference that the one person who had the least to do with Theobald's edition of Shakespeare was Theobald himself.

Another result of this honesty of action and generosity of acknowledgment was that the disposition early manifested itself to deprive him in numerous instances of the credit that was his due. The men who profited by his labors frequently forgot to mention his name. They either assumed to themselves the credit of his emendations or ascribed them to others. In the former bad

business, Warburton was pre-eminent. He reaped too from it at the time, and to some extent is still reaping from it, the reward which the world is not indisposed to bestow upon rascality in high places. A number of Theobald's happiest emendations appear in his edition with no name of Theobald attached to them or of any one else. As he occasionally gave his predecessor credit, the reader would naturally draw the inference that he had ascribed to him all that was his due. He would further assume, and as a matter of fact did assume, both from what was put in and from what was left out, that everything unattributed was Warburton's own.

A single but noteworthy illustration of this fraudulent practice is all that can be given here. Notice has already been taken of the passage in 'Twelth Night' in which, in the folio of 1623 and the later editions, it is said of Sir Andrew Aguecheek's hair that "it will not cool my nature." Theobald's famous emendation of this incomprehensible remark by substituting "curl by" for "cool my" has now become so perfectly established as part of the text that most people suppose that this is the way in which the passage originally appeared. The change of words he made he communicated to Warburton in a private letter[1] which the latter, when he brought out his edition, had no reason to suppose to have escaped destruction. Still, not even his reckless effrontery would allow him to take the risk of claiming this alteration for himself directly; but he did it by implication. There is no mention of Theobald in his note on the passage, no

[1] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 211.

suggestion that he had anything whatever to do with the change. "We should read," said Warburton, after quoting the original, "'it will not curl by nature.' The joke is evident." Much more evident is his own unscrupulousness. Yet for nearly a third of a century the stolen wares which he had passed off as his own were looked upon as his property. To him the emendation was duly credited in Johnson's edition of 1765.[1] So it was in the edition of 1773.[2] At length in that of 1778 — Warburton was then in his dotage — tardy justice was rendered to the real author by Steevens, whatever may have been his motive. "This emendation is Theobald's," he wrote, "though adopted without acknowledgment by Dr. Warburton."[3] This is very far from being the only instance of which a similar story can be told.

Warburton did even worse than this, though he did not attempt to do it publicly. A man who in his first literary venture palmed off as his own a long passage from one of Milton's prose works was not likely to feel much hesitation in appropriating the results of the labor of an obscure scholar, whenever and wherever he thought it could be done without danger of detection. Theobald had begged his aid in the preparation of his preface, though he admitted that it was unreasonable to ask what he could not well acknowledge in print. That part of his work, he said, was the only one "in which I shall not be able to be just to my friends; for to confess assistance in a preface will, I am afraid, make me appear too naked."[4] The preface was not anything to be proud

[1] Johnson's Shakespeare, vol. ii. p. 361.
[2] Vol. iv. p. 153.
[3] Vol. iv. p. 165.
[4] Nichols, vol. ii. p. 622.

of; but such as it was Warburton marked in his own copy of Theobald's edition the passages in it for which he was himself responsible.[1] In so doing there was nothing objectionable. But he further proceeded to designate a number of notes which, according to his account, Theobald had received from him and had then deprived him of and made his own. Had there ever been the slightest justification for making the charge he did, it would never have been intrusted to chance disclosure. No silence would have been maintained about it in his own edition. No simple mention of the wrong he had suffered would have sufficed; it would have been proclaimed vociferously. Yet this fictitious private record, though not deserving of the slightest respect, has in modern times been apparently accepted as a treasure-house of fact, and the slanderer of the dead man has been loaded with honors which the dead man had won.

The example cited above is a single illustration out of many of the systematic spoliation to which Theobald's emendations and explanations were subjected, especially during the latter half of the eighteenth century. But the same process was extended to his general methods as well as his specific restorations. He had been the first to attempt any real collation of the sources of the text, the first to make an examination of contemporary Elizabethan literature to illustrate its meaning. The credit of doing both was carefully transferred to the men who maligned him. According to Dr. Johnson, it was to Pope that we are indebted for the knowledge of the methods by which the original could be restored to its

[1] Cambridge Shakespeare (ed. of 1891), vol. i. p. xxxi.

primitive purity. "He was the first that knew," said he of the poet, "at least the first that told, by what helps the text might be improved. If he inspected the early editions negligently, he taught others to be more accurate." Whom did he teach? it may well be asked. Certainly not Hanmer, certainly not Warburton. Not even can Dr. Johnson himself be reckoned among his disciples. So far as any later editors achieved success, it was by following and improving upon the methods which Theobald had adopted. But even this tribute to Pope was surpassed by a similar tribute paid to Johnson himself and his associate. To Steevens it was, Isaac Reed tells us, that "the praise is due of having first adopted and carried into execution Dr. Johnson's admirable plan of illustrating Shakespeare by the study of the writers of his time." [1]

The mention of Johnson brings up the consideration of the additional malignant influence which acted upon Theobald's reputation. Pope had been the literary dictator of his age. His likes and dislikes, his favorable or unfavorable judgments were echoed by thousands. In due time he was succeeded by Dr. Johnson. The latter manifested from the outset a disposition to assume his predecessor's prejudices, save where they conflicted with his own. To this he was largely urged by gratitude. His poem of 'London' had been published in 1738 in the days of his poverty and distress. Pope had praised it, had inquired about its author, and had made some effort, though with no result, to serve his

[1] Johnson and Steevens' Shakespeare, Reed's Advertisement, ed. of 1803, vol. i. p. iii.

interests. Again, Johnson had felt himself indebted to Warburton, who had become Theobald's most virulent depreciator. His own little treatise on 'Macbeth' had been put forth in 1745. Two years later Warburton, in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare, spoke with the utmost contempt of the remarks and observations on the plays of the dramatist which had from time to time appeared. They were, he said, absolutely below serious notice. One exception, however, he made to this sweeping condemnation. This was in favor of "some critical notes on Macbeth, given as a specimen of a projected edition, and written, as appears, by a man of parts and genius." [1]

Johnson never forgot any benefit he received in the days of his adversity. He did not seek to analyze the motives which had led Warburton to speak of him in terms so flattering. It did not occur to him that the praise bestowed may have been due to the compliment he had paid to his commender's learning, or to the sympathy the latter felt with the hostile criticism which had been passed upon Hanmer. Him Warburton detested almost as much as he admired himself. It was enough for Johnson that while obscure and almost penniless he had been selected for approval where all others had been censured. He entertained henceforth a grateful remembrance of the man. "He praised me," Boswell represents him as saying, "when praise was of value to me." It unconsciously disposed him to side still more with Pope and Warburton in their disparagement of Theobald. As time went on there was a distinct in-

[1] Warburton's Shakespeare, vol. i. p. xiii.

crease of the depreciatory manner in which he spoke of the last editor, and he finally exhibited nearly as much virulence in his comments upon him as did the two others.

This hostile attitude did not show itself at first. In his observations upon 'Macbeth' Johnson fell in with the sentiment still lingering, if not generally prevailing, and treated his predecessor with a good deal of consideration. But in the course of a few years he adopted the current practice of depreciation and calumny which the influence of Pope, more potent after death than in life, had by that time made the fashion. In the proposals he put forth in 1756 for his own projected edition of Shakespeare he made prominent a charge the truth of which he did not vouch for and the falsity of which he could have ascertained by the slightest investigation, if investigation indeed were needed. He observed that both Rowe and Pope were ignorant of ancient English literature. This was a sort of knowledge which he could not deny to their successor. But he broke the force of it as far as possible by remarking that Theobald, "if fame be just to his memory, considered learning only as an instrument of gain, and made no further enquiry after his author's meaning, when once he had notes sufficient to embellish his page with the expected decorations." This purely gratuitous as well as baseless slander came with an especially ill grace from a professed moralist, who for his own protection hedged about with a condition a false report which nevertheless, coming from him, was sure to be accepted by all as a truth.

By the time his own edition appeared Johnson had ceased to speak indulgently of Theobald's failures or to express any admiration for his successes. In his famous preface, one of the most widely read pieces he ever wrote, his tone was disparaging and contemptuous throughout. He re-echoed all the misstatements which Pope had originated and Warburton had repeated. He spoke of Theobald as restoring a comma and then celebrating the achievement by a panegyric upon himself. He depreciated his ability and acquirements and gave to his slanderer the credit of several of his emendations. He described him personally as "weak and ignorant, mean and faithless, petulant and ostentatious." The nearest approach to either fairness or truth that Johnson reached in his characterization was the conclusion of the sentence in which he spoke of Theobald as a "man of narrow comprehension, with no native and intrinsic splendor of genius, with little of the artificial light of learning, but zealous for minute accuracy and not negligent in pursuing it." Johnson's intellect was indeed too powerful to be imposed upon by Pope's talk about verbal criticism. He fully recognized its value as well as its necessity. He saw that the poet's hostility to it and depreciation of it was due to his irritation at finding his deficiencies detected by a man, according to this view, "of heavy diligence with very slender powers." But while he exposed the pretension that miscarriage in an undertaking of this sort was due only to having a mind too great for such minute employment, the apparent censure of Pope contributed to strengthen the belief that in speaking of Theobald as

he had done he was displaying absolute impartiality of judgment.

To both his great detractors Theobald was far superior in the special subject in which his achievement came into competition with theirs. But had his ability and acquirements been immensely greater than they were, they would not have enabled him to hold his ground in general estimation against the authority of two such mighty antagonists as Pope and Johnson. Henceforward, either through the influence of the one or of the other, or through the combined influence of both, the tone in which he was spoken of by all succeeding editors and critics was one of extreme disparagement. We have seen how Capell, who in many respects resembled him, lost for once the unintelligibility of his utterance long enough to construct on this point sentences sufficiently clear to be understood at a single reading. A not uncommon belief of the time was expressed by one of Capell's reviewers. He tells us that "Mr. Theobald, who obtained some degree of fame merely by being the adversary of Pope, possessed neither ingenuity, judgment nor scarcely common sense."[1] The smug Farmer in his vastly overrated essay on the learning of Shakespeare went constantly out of his way to cast reflections upon an editor whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose.

This became indeed the prevalent practice. All sorts of stories were fabricated about Theobald and set in circulation.[2] All sorts of charges were devised. Men

[1] English Review, February, 1784, vol. iii. p. 171.

[2] *E. g.*, Goldsmith's 'Citizen of the World,' letter [illegible] //2

were sure to find in him the weaknesses to which they themselves were subject, or the characteristics which they were secretly conscious they themselves possessed. Johnson wrote avowedly for gain. Hence it was easy for him to believe that Theobald's conduct was actuated by purely sordid motives. Steevens was as unscrupulous as Pope himself, if he thought he could convey safely a wrong impression, belief in which would rebound to his own credit. He accused him therefore not merely of inattention, but of disingenuousness. If Theobald made a mistake resulting from oversight — and in the mass of details he handled he was sure to make some — it was attributed, not to inadvertence, but to deliberate intent to deceive. A reading in 'Romeo and Juliet' in Pope's Shakespeare his successor imputed to the poet's own invention. He could not find it, he said, in any other edition. It so happens it occurs in the imperfect quarto of 1597, included by Theobald himself in his own list of authorities. In making his collation he had therefore committed an error. In making the statement he did about his predecessor he was guilty of a wrong imputation based upon unjustifiable carelessness on his own part. But carelessness would not suffice to explain such action to Steevens. It was disingenuousness which had prompted the remark. That severe moralist felt himself compelled to say in the discussion of a somewhat similar erroneous statement, that Theobald, relying upon the scarcity of the old quartos, made them answerable for anything he thought proper to insert.[1]

[1] Johnson and Steevens' Shakespeare, ed. of 1773, vol. x. p. 131.

This is no single instance. The opportunities which Theobald occasionally gave for invidious reflection upon his personal character and motives were never neglected. In the preface[1] to his first edition he certainly strained faith to the point of credulity by remarking that he had read above eight hundred old English plays to ascertain the obsolete and uncommon phrases of Shakespeare. He undoubtedly included in the estimate different editions of the same play. But taking the most favorable view possible of the statement, it was an unpardonable exaggeration, and in the second edition it was dropped. Still, the original assertion continued to bring grief to the sensitive soul of Steevens. In the edition of 1778 he called attention to it. He noted that Theobald had omitted it in the republication of his work. "I hope he did," said Steevens piously, "through a consciousness of its utter falsehood; for if we except the plays of the authors already mentioned, it would be difficult to discover half the number that were written early enough to serve the purpose for which he pretends to have perused this imaginary stock of ancient literature."[2]

If Theobald had exaggerated, he had apparently repented. Such a state of mind is one of which Steevens seems never to have been consciously aware. He went on to make certain statements about the number of plays which had been in Theobald's possession. "I might add," he said, "that the private collection of Mr. Theobald, which, including the plays of Jonson, Shake-

[1] Page lxviii.

[2] Johnson and Steevens' Shakespeare, vol. i. p. 76, note.

speare and Fletcher, did not amount to many more than a hundred, remained entire in the hands of the late Mr. Tonson till the time of his death."[2] This was intended to give the impression, not merely that Theobald owned no more than this limited number of plays, but that these were all with which he was familiar. So the note remained in all his later editions. But in that of 1793[1] Isaac Reed was permitted to follow it up with some further information. It was in September, 1744, that Theobald died. In the month following, his books were dispersed. "His library," wrote Reed, "was advertised to be sold by auction by Charles Corbett, and on the third day was the following lot: two hundred and ninety-five old English plays in quarto, some of them so scarce as not to be had at any price; to many of which are manuscript notes and remarks by Mr. Theobald, all done up neatly in boards and single plays. They will all be sold in one lot." According to this account the few more than a hundred plays had swelled to nearly three hundred. This of itself would effectually dispose of Steevens' assertion. He may at first have believed what he said to be true; but he continued the original statement unchanged, while printing alongside of it the evidence which showed it to be false. Reed had, however, made a mistake. The lot he specified as embracing two hundred and ninety-five plays embraced but one hundred and ninety-five. But besides these the catalogue contained several lots, each designated simply as "A Volume of Plays." In addition there were the collected or bound-up works of specific

[1] Vol. i. p. 331.

authors, among whom were Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Lyly, and Marston. The number of plays in Theobald's library must clearly have reached several hundred.[1]

The catalogue did more than prove the falsity of Steevens' insinuation. It makes clear that the statements, now so current, about the penury of Theobald's later years must be taken with many more than the ordinary grains of allowance. The sale occupied four successive evenings. It needs no argument to prove that it never took that number of days to dispose of the library of a man who had long been living and had actually died in a state of destitution. Especially would this observation be true of the possessor of one hundred and ninety-five old English plays which occupied a place of so little prominence in his collection as to be sold in one lot. Of course there is a great difference in the values of that age and of our own. The accumulation of such a number of pieces would be possible now only for a man of vast wealth. But even in those days of low prices and of comparatively little demand, such a collec-

[1] The title-page of the catalogue of Theobald's library offered for sale runs as follows :

"A Catalogue of the Library of Lewis Theobald, Esq., deceas'd : Among which are many of the Classicks, Poets and Historians, of the best Editions. Many Variorums and Delphins. Several Curious Manuscripts. Very near a compleat collection of the scarce old Quarto Plays, all neatly done up singly in Boards. And other curious Articles. Which will be sold by Auction, on Tuesday, Oct. 23rd, 1744, and the three following Evenings, beginning exactly at Five o'Clock at St. Paul's Coffee-House, in St. Paul's Church-Yard. By Charles Corbett."

Three years later an advertisement by Thomas Osborn in the St. James Evening Post — No. 5808, April 9–11, 1747 — shows that Theobald's collection of plays had been still kept together in part.

tion represented no slight pecuniary investment. Theobald was pretty surely never overburdened with means; he doubtless considered himself poor and was considered by others as poor; but it was comparative poverty he suffered from, and not actual.

Books indeed were the tools of Theobald's trade. In them, without question, his wealth largely consisted. The number of them in his possession, limited as were his means, renders particularly ridiculous the doubt or denial of his learning which later it became the fashion to affect. This was a view of his acquirements which it never entered into the minds of his contemporaries to conceive. With them the accusation was that he had too much lumber of the sort in his head. Pope, whose deficiency lay on that side, described in the original 'Dunciad' the contents of Theobald's library. He called it 'a Gothic Vatican' in days when the term 'Gothic' conveyed a sense distinctly disparaging. According to his representation it consisted specifically of dry scholastic and theological tomes, and generally of all the dull authors of the dullest ages. There was unquestionably a good deal of truth in the picture. Even did we lack exact knowledge of what his library contained at his death it was manifest, from Theobald's correspondence with Warburton and from his notes on Shakespeare, that at an earlier period it was liberally supplied with editions of the Greek and Latin classics; with the treatises upon them of commentators and scholiasts; with the writings in Latin of numerous modern scholars in various departments of learning; with English authors whom everybody reads, but much

more with those whom scarcely anybody read then and not many have read since. It is equally evident that he was familiar in varying degrees with Anglo-Saxon, with French, with Italian, and with Spanish. In the letters to Warburton he quoted Machiavelli, Cynthio, and Rabelais in the original; and in his possession were found works in the three modern tongues mentioned.

The truth is that while there have been far greater men among the editors of Shakespeare than Theobald, there has never been one whose learning covered more ground in many different fields, perhaps not one whose learning covered so much. He not only had the books in these various subjects, he was familiar with their contents. It was the knowledge derived from them, only to be acquired by long and arduous study, that fixed upon him the reputation of heavy diligence and plodding industry. No one can read his letters to Warburton without recognizing his superiority to his correspondent, not merely in the accuracy but in the comprehensiveness and extent of his learning. His authorities were not brought forward for any purpose of display. They were cited in the privacy of personal communications to illustrate a point or to enforce an argument. It is only the most hardened of specialists that would now recognize even the names of a large number of the scholiasts to whose writings he refers. His familiarity with recondite sources of information would excite the respect of the profoundest of modern scholars as it assuredly did that of the scholars of his own time. Neglecting this formidable body of critics and commentators, let us confine our attention to the ancient writers whom he cited

in the course of this correspondence. They constitute a list well worth remarking.

The Latin authors from whom he extracted pertinent passages were Cicero, Claudian, Julius Frontinus, Horace, Juvenal, Lucretius, Manilius, Martial, Nonius Marcellus, Ovid, Paterculus, Plautus, the elder Pliny, Sallust, Seneca, Statius, Suetonius, Publius Syrus, Terence, Tibullus, Aurelius Victor, and Virgil. In Greek the same wide range of reading was displayed. He cited passages from Æschylus, Anacreon, Appian, Aristophanes, Athenæus, Dion Cassius, Dioscorides, Euripides, Heliodorus, Harpocration, Hesychius, Hesiod, Homer, Menander, Musæus, Plutarch, Sophocles, Strabo, Suidas, Theophrastus, and Xenophon. The references to these all came in naturally. Theobald's acquaintance with the least known writers of this list, and with other writers less known than the least known among these was then conceded by all. By some it was made a subject of ridicule. It is a proof of the damage wrought by Pope to his critic's reputation that later times denied the latter the possession of the erudition for the accumulation of which he was derided by contemporaries. Any assertion of belief in his acquirements was put forth hesitatingly. How all-potent had become the depreciation of his learning, how late it continued, can be seen from the account given of his life by John Nichols in 1817. This was as favorable as any one then dared to make it, for Nichols had some knowledge of what he was talking about. He ventured to utter by implication a mild protest against the then prevalent derogatory estimate of Theobald's attainments.

"In an intimate acquaintance with the Greek and Roman Classicks," he wrote, "he was at least on an equality with Mr. Pope — perhaps even his superior." [1] Did we not know this to be sincere, we should suspect it of sarcasm. Pope was something far greater than a scholar; but his pretensions to learning were of the slimmest.

It was a consequence of the disrepute into which Theobald fell, and of the contempt heaped upon his learning and ability, that the progress of Shakespearean scholarship was distinctly retarded in the eighteenth century. One early apparent result of it was his failure to bring out his promised edition of the minor poems and with it the glossary to his complete works. To the preparation of both he had paid a good deal of attention. At the time the edition of the plays was published they were announced in his preface as ready to appear in a single volume.[2] A few months later he made a statement to the same effect in a letter to one of the journals.[3] But for some reason the work never saw the light. The fault may possibly have been due to his own indolence. It is far more likely to have been caused by his inability to secure a sufficient number of subscribers to justify going to the press. But whatever the reason, the result was to be deplored. One of these undertakings certainly would not and the other might not have met fully the demands of modern scholarship. But, however unsatisfactory they might seem now, they would

[1] Nichols' Literary Anecdotes, vol. v. p. 729.
[2] Theobald's Shakespeare, vol. i. p. xliv.
[3] Grub-street Journal, No. 232, June 6, 1734.

have been a vast advance upon anything known then.

No small number of illustrations could be furnished of the uncertainty and ignorance which came to prevail in the eighteenth century as a result of ignoring Theobald's contributions to the knowledge of Shakespeare, or of dismissing them with contempt. Definitions and interpretations which he had given were disregarded or set aside. After long delay his discoveries were rediscovered, his explanations were re-explained and then accepted. But the credit due was carefully transferred to the later promulgator of his views. Take the single case of the word *unaneled* in 'Hamlet.' Theobald not only explained the word properly, but showed both from the derivation and the context that it could mean nothing else than what he said it meant. In truth it had been one of the few words contained in the meager glossary included in the Shakespeare supplementary volume of 1710. There it had been defined briefly but correctly as "without extreme unction." But even after Theobald's fuller and absolutely convincing treatment, it took more than a half a century to get this signification established. Hanmer fancied it allied to *anneal*. Accordingly he explained it as meaning 'unprepared,' because to anneal metals is to prepare them for manufacture. Warburton — apparently out of pure perverseness — went back to Pope's interpretation of "no knell rung," which Theobald had completely disposed of in his note. Johnson actually adopted this absurd definition in his dictionary, though he professed doubt as to its correctness. When he came to his edition of Shakespeare he was still in the

same state of uncertainty. "I think," he said, with apparent reluctance, "Theobald's objection to the sense of *unaneal'd* for 'notified by the bell' must be owned to be very strong. I have not yet by my enquiry satisfied myself."[1] This doubt about accepting a perfectly satisfactory explanation, this preference for a preposterous one continued through the editions of 1773, 1778, and 1785. In the magazines men continued to quarrel over the signification of the word. It was not till Malone's edition of 1790 that Pope's ridiculous definition disappeared from the notes. He was followed by Steevens in 1793. Thus after long waiting and protracted controversy was finally received as settled the true sense which had been given and confirmed by evidence more than half a century before. But in the pages of neither Steevens nor Malone can Theobald's name be found as the one who had had anything to do with the explanation, still less as the one who had established its correctness.

With the further researches which followed the publication of the variorum of 1821 there came to be a gradual awakening among Shakespeare scholars to the value of Theobald's services. His merits were admitted, though somewhat grudgingly. He was a dull man, of course. Had not both Pope and Johnson said so, followed by the whole rabble of critics? But as men studied more and more the original authorities, a sense of the injustice with which he had been treated began to dawn upon their minds. One of the earlier recognitions of what he had accomplished came from Maginn

[1] Johnson's Shakespeare, vol. x. p. 168

in his discussion of Farmer's 'Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare.' It was not allowed to be over-enthusiastic. Nor was its author any better informed than his contemporaries as to Theobald's character or as to the facts of his career. So on the strength of the misstatements contained in the notes to 'The Dunciad' and sources of information equally accurate, Maginn accepted and repeated the current charges against Theobald of inordinate self-conceit and of jealous dislike of his rival editor. Furthermore he was still under the prevalent delusion that hostility between the two men sprang up because they were both engaged at the same time in producing editions of Shakespeare. One indeed gets from his account the impression that Theobald was the aggressor. "Pope, he thought, and with some justice," wrote Maginn, "had treated him unfairly, in deviating from the paths of poetry to intrude into the walks of commentatorship, especially as it was known that Theobald had been long engaged upon Shakespeare before the booksellers enlisted Pope."[1] As anything of this kind was never known to have been, but is known to have not been, we can dismiss without comment the further remark that Theobald felt it hard "that a great name should be called in to blight the labor of his life."

But with all his shortcomings in knowledge Maginn had a full appreciation of what the first great editor of Shakespeare accomplished. "A worse-used man," he said, "does not exist in our literature than this same poor Theobald. . . . It is the commentary of Theobald

[1] Fraser's Magazine, vol. xx. p. 266, September, 1839.

that guides all his successors, including those who most insult him." In his attitude, in truth, Maginn was a good deal in advance of Charles Knight, whose edition of Shakespeare appeared about the same time as the criticism made by the former upon Farmer. Knight recognized fully the superiority of Theobald to the five editors who were his immediate predecessors or successors. In a way he was disposed to do him justice. "He has left us, we cannot avoid thinking," are his words, — it was apparently something desirable to avoid thinking, — "the best of all the conjectural emendations." Yet he lumped him among the members of that one of his two schools into which he divided all Shakespeare commentators, — the school "which did not seek any very exact acquaintance with our early literature, and which would have despised the exhibition, if not the reality of antiquarian and bibliographical knowledge." Ignorance of the man and of his work could not much farther go.

With the increasingly minute attention which came to be paid to the text of Shakespeare, views like that just expressed could not long prevail among those who devoted themselves to this branch of investigation. The progress of research was constantly stripping from others and restoring to the rightful owner the credit of emendations which had generally been accepted; though in this direction there still remains a good deal to be done. The estimate in which Theobald was held came in consequence to rise steadily with the special students of the dramatist. Two or three illustrations out of many must suffice to show the general direction of the

current of opinion which began to set in during the middle and later part of the nineteenth century. In this country as early as 1854 Richard Grant White, then engaged in the preparation of his edition, bore witness to the excellence of Theobald's work. "Theobald," he wrote, "is one of the very best editors who have fallen to the lot of Shakespeare. He was the first who did any great service by conjectural emendation and the judicious use of the quartos." [1]

A little more than a half-score years later a further impressive tribute was paid by the editors of the Cambridge Shakespeare. Their testimony was the more valuable because it came from men who had made it a special object to assign to each commentator full credit for the emendations for which he was individually responsible. Nor could they have failed to notice, though they did not attempt to record them, the numerous instances in which Theobald had varied from the previous editions by restoring the right reading from the original sources. They arraigned sharply the injustice of Warton's words in speaking of Theobald as "a cold, plodding and tasteless writer and critic." They pronounced him incomparably superior to his predecessors and immediate successors. As a result of their own examination of the quartos and folios they expressed distinct dissent from Capell's assertion that Theobald was no better collator than Pope.[2] In the great variorum edition now appearing he is described in the same tone of hearty appreciation, as "one of the best editors

[1] Shakespeare's Scholar, p. 9 (1854).
[2] Vol. i. p. xxxii, ed. of 1891.

Shakespeare ever had."[1] Nor, finally, is any one likely to overlook the eloquent tribute paid to Theobald by a scholar of our own day, who, not content with defending him against his assailants, has attacked them with vigor in a noted article in which he styled Theobald "the Porson of Shakespearean criticism."

But after all, this recognition of Theobald's merits has been largely confined to those who have interested themselves in the text of Shakespeare. Their tributes are at best but eddies in the general current of depreciation which has been flowing with almost unvarying steadiness since his death. By the mass of educated men the same old beliefs continue to be entertained, the same old absurd statements continue to be made. The absolute contradiction between the view taken of the man and of the man's work makes no impression upon the common mind. He was heavy; but he succeeded in producing a better edition of Shakespeare than eminent authors of his century, two of whom indeed were most eminent. He was dull; but he was able to clear up difficulties which had baffled the efforts of the acutest intellects of his own and preceding times. He was pedantic; but he freed the work of the dramatist from charges which pedantic criticism had sought to fasten upon its character. He was tasteless; but he supplied readings far more poetic than those of the men presumably pre-eminent for taste, and gave to passages whose meaning was in dispute a loftier and therefore better interpretation than did they. In the comments made upon Theobald we are constantly reminded of the line of reasoning

[1] Furness's 'New Variorum edition of Shakespeare,' vol. iii. p. 456.

followed by Macaulay when he put forth his dictum that Boswell became the greatest of biographers because he was so distinctly the greatest of fools.

Naturally the editors of Pope have as a rule adopted the opinion he expressed of the man who had made him feel his inferiority as a Shakespeare scholar. Even those of them who have taken delight in exposing his untrustworthiness in other matters or about other men have never sought to show the falsity of his assertions about his rival. There are those among them who have repeated them with added emphasis. As late as 1889, we can see their attitude exemplified in the elaborate edition of the poet's works which then appeared. That edition cannot be charged — certainly at the outset — with manifesting the least tenderness for Pope's memory. Yet in the introduction to the volume containing 'The Dunciad' we find all the old misrepresentations and mendacities in regard to Theobald flourishing in their pristine vigor. The selection of the original hero of the satire, it is there asserted, was in itself judicious. Theobald, we are told, was the type of a class which the poet was resolved to crush. "He was pedantic," remarks the editor, "poor, and somewhat malignant. He had attempted with equal ill-success original poetry, translation, and play-writing; and had indeed no disqualification for the throne of Dulness except his insignificance."[1] Yet even the writer of this passage, which contains about as much error as can be crowded into a similar number of words, concedes that Theobald "was by nature better qualified than Pope for the task which

[1] Pope's 'Works,' vol. iv. p. 27.

both had undertaken; and he had exhibited Pope to the world in a position of somewhat ridiculous inferiority." This is a good deal to be accomplished by a commentator pedantic, somewhat malignant, and altogether insignificant. The view is apparently based upon the theory which Pope and his partisans held or implied, that the stupider one was, the greater was his chance of success as a commentator. To be endowed with dulness specially qualified a man to undertake the task of annotating and explaining an author. It was hardly to be expected, however, that such a view would receive in any form the countenance of one who had assumed the office of an editor.

From many of the calumnies once accepted as to his character and achievement, Theobald's name has been rescued in these later times. But it is doubtful — perhaps it would be better to say, it is much more than doubtful — if his reputation will ever recover from the blow inflicted upon it by his implacable enemy. For while the exposure of the poet's practices has revealed his character as a man, it has not rehabilitated the reputation of his victims. As time goes by, there will be among special students of Shakespeare an increasing sense of the value of the services Theobald rendered. From time to time a few voices will be lifted up publicly in protest against the gross injustice which has been done to his attainments and abilities. But there is never likely to be any general recognition of his merits, never any complete dissipation of the cloud of detraction which after his death settled upon his memory; for to say nothing of his other traducers there will never cease

to operate the potent influence of him who was the greatest of them all.

True it is that for us the glamour which once invested the name of Pope has vanished almost entirely. As a poet he is sadly shorn of his ancient repute and glory. There are scores and even hundreds of cultivated men to whom he is now little more than a name. Phrases and lines from works he wrote are still in every one's mouth; but comparatively few among those that use them are they who know from where they come. Even on the part of those who are fairly familiar with his writings, there is a tendency to depreciate the poet for the very qualities and characteristics which once gave him fame and influence. But for all that, Pope still remains a power. Furthermore he will always remain a power. In every generation he will have a body of adherents and admirers while brilliancy and wit and pointed expression find favor among men. His readers will become his partisans; for admiration of the man's work will, as is ever the case, extend to admiration of the man himself. In every controversy in which he was engaged they will embrace with ignorant but enthusiastic zeal his side, because it is the only side they know or care to know. They will adopt the views he took of his opponents, they will accept with undoubting faith his grossest misrepresentations of their character and acts. No agency can act effectively against the affection and admiration which genius inspires. No interest can attach to the fortunes of an obscure scholar whose cause will receive its only support from that sense of justice which appeals to but a limited number. By the few his

worth may be recognized; but by the many he will continue to be either disregarded or calumniated. The fate of Theobald is likely to remain for all time a striking instance, in the annals of literary history, of how successfully, to use the words of the author he did so much to illustrate, malice can bear down truth.

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